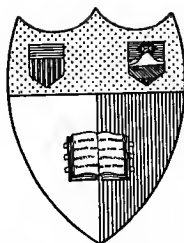


The Strategy on the  
Western Front  
(1914-1918)

H. H. Sargent

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The  
Strategy on the Western Front

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# THE STRATEGY

ON THE

# WESTERN FRONT

(1914-1918)

BY

HERBERT HOWLAND SARGENT

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL UNITED STATES ARMY, RETIRED; COLONEL FIFTH UNITED STATES VOLUNTEER INFANTRY DURING SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR; LIEUTENANT-COLONEL TWENTY-NINTH UNITED STATES VOLUNTEER INFANTRY DURING PHILIPPINE INSURRECTION; LIEUTENANT-COLONEL UNITED STATES NATIONAL ARMY, DURING GREAT WORLD WAR; MEMBER OF THE MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MASSACHUSETTS; AUTHOR OF "NAPOLEON BONAPARTE'S FIRST CAMPAIGN," "THE CAMPAIGN OF MARENGO," AND "THE CAMPAIGN OF SANTIAGO DE CUBA"

*With Maps*



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TO  
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL  
DANIEL CROSBY PEARSON  
UNITED STATES ARMY, RETIRED

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR IN  
REMEMBRANCE OF OUR ARMY SERVICE  
TOGETHER AND OF A LONG-  
ABIDING FRIENDSHIP



## PREFACE

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**M**OST of the chapters in this book were published in the *North American Review* in a series of articles beginning with the February issue of 1919 and ending with the October issue of the same year. They have been revised, certain omitted parts restored, and are now published in book form.

For suggestions and criticisms in the English of the text my thanks are due to Lieutenant Raymond H. Fuller, United States National Army, who was one of my assistants while I was on duty in the War Plans Division of the General Staff, United States Army, at Army War College, Washington, D. C., during the summer and fall of 1918.

H. H. S.

JACKSONVILLE, OREGON

*May 7, 1920*



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**War is a business of positions.—*Napoleon***



# The Strategy on the Western Front

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## CHAPTER I

### GERMANY'S FIRST GREAT MISTAKE

**P**RELIMINARY to any discussion of the strategy of the war, it will not be out of place to remark that in this war the enormous numbers of the opposing armies, the wonderful improvements in artillery and in small arms, the use of noxious and poisonous gases, and of steam engines, gas engines, railroads, tanks, motor trucks, motorcycles, automobiles, electric telegraphy, wireless telegraphy, telephones, searchlights, submarines, aeroplanes, and other inventions and discoveries, have had a far-reaching effect in modifying and changing the application of strategical principles. In some cases they have made their application much easier, and in others much more difficult, but in

no case have they had any effect whatever in changing the principles themselves. These principles are immutable. They are the same today as in the days of Alexander, of Hannibal, of Caesar, and of Napoleon.

To operate offensively, when practicable to do so; to bring superior forces against the enemy at the point of attack; to maneuver upon interior lines when possible; to surprise and deceive the enemy as to the plans of operation and place of attack; to divide the forces of the enemy and beat them in detail; to operate or attack in such a direction as to threaten or destroy the communications of the enemy without exposing your own: these are the main unchangeable principles of strategy. It is by their observance that the main object of all battles, the defeat and annihilation or capture of the enemy, can best be obtained. They are the foundation rocks upon which all great military successes are built. Their observance shows good generalship; their violation, poor. No commander can long disregard or transgress them without bringing disaster and ruin upon his army.

During the war Germany took, or tried to

take, the offensive three times on the Western Front. She began the war with a great offensive there and continued it until she was forced to take up a defensive rôle as a result of the battle of the Marne. In February, 1916, at Verdun, she began her second great effort to break through the Allied lines, but this also was a complete failure. And on March 21, 1918, she tried for the third time to smash through the lines and to resume a war of movement, but utterly failed in her efforts. In each of these offensives Germany made a great strategical mistake; and it is the purpose here to show why this was so, and to analyze somewhat in detail the operations on the Western Front from a strategical point of view.

Although it may not have been Germany's intention at the outset to take the offensive on both her East and West fronts at the same time, nevertheless this is exactly what she did. At the very time that the German armies were overrunning Belgium and invading France, Hindenburg was engaged in East Prussia in a great offensive which culminated in the battle of Tannenberg.

When Napoleon made war in a single theater of operations it was his invariable rule to take the offensive,<sup>1</sup> but to take it along but one line at a time; and had Germany followed this rule and held defensively the French front from Luxemburg to Switzerland, and then united the remainder of her forces with those of Austria offensively, first against Russia, then against Serbia, she could have defeated and crushed the armies of both in a short while, and then have returned to the Western Front and with overwhelming forces, flushed with victory, have speedily invaded France *via* Belgium, as she had originally planned, or overrun both Belgium and Holland and conquered France. And in the meantime, while she was disposing of her enemies outside of France, had Great Britain

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<sup>1</sup> It is a well-established maxim or principle of war that THE OFFENSIVE ALONE PROMISES DECISIVE RESULTS; but there is another principle just as well established, which limits the application of this principle when war is made within a single theater of operations, and that is, TO OPERATE OFFENSIVELY AND IN FORCE ALONG BUT ONE LINE AT A TIME. These two principles, which were almost universally followed by Napoleon in his remarkable military career, were several times enunciated by him during his life. In fact, it has been largely through a study of his campaigns and of the methods followed by him in gaining his victories, that these two principles have come to be almost universally accepted by military men as true guides for conducting campaigns.

and Belgium declared war against her, she could easily have held her Western Front against them, since neither, at that time, had any army of consequence; and then, upon her return, could have gone through Belgium without bringing upon herself the odium of violating a neutral country.

Since the front between Germany and France was only one hundred and fifty miles in length, and was protected on the German side by the river Moselle and the fortifications of Metz, and just back of them by the river Rhine and the fortress of Strassburg; and since the front could not have been turned by France without her violating the neutrality of either Belgium or Switzerland, or both, which it is certain she would not have done, it could have been held by Germany with a small part of her combatant forces, while she was destroying her enemies in other parts of Europe. Had she followed this plan, the war at most would have lasted but two years, and probably not so long as that. Had she followed this plan, Great Britain in all probability would not have declared war against her at the beginning; for it was the violation of

Belgium's neutrality which brought Great Britain immediately into the war. Had Germany followed this plan, she would not have turned the good opinion of the world against her at the start. And it was all so easy, had Germany had any strategical foresight; but being obsessed with the idea that she must take the offensive at the very start against France; and having worked out plans along these lines for years; and believing that she could conquer France in this way as she had done in 1870; and failing to see that Russia's entrance into the war in 1914 made the strategical situation vastly different from what it was in 1870, she swept forward to her ultimate defeat. This mistake, this lack of strategical foresight, this stupendous blunder by the German General Staff was appalling, calamitous, for the Central Powers. It turned what should have been a short war into a long one. It cost the Central Powers billions of dollars and millions of men. It brought the young giant, America, into the war against them, and arrayed against them a world in arms. And, what from a German point of view is most catastrophic of all, it has, along

with several subsequent strategical blunders, resulted in Germany's practical annihilation as a great military power.

It is interesting to note that notwithstanding the fact that Germany took the offensive on both her Western and Eastern fronts at the outset of the war, she came very close to being victorious on both fronts. In East Prussia she won against the Russians the great battle of Tannenberg, and on the Western Front, had she not been forced to detach two corps from her army just before the battle of the Marne, she probably would have won that battle, captured Paris, and perhaps conquered France before the end of the year. This goes to show that however strong, well trained, well disciplined, and well prepared an army may be, its commander cannot violate a strategical principle, even unintentionally, without running great risk of serious consequences. It is true, of course, that mere chance, or the fortune of war, often plays a great part in determining results; and that as a consequence victory not infrequently may be obtained in spite of a violation of some strategical principle; but it

is also true that failure may result, as in the present case, solely because of its violation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since writing this chapter I have learned that no less a person than Field Marshal von Moltke himself approved of the defensive strategy on the Western Front in case Germany was involved in war with Russia and France at the same time. His view, reported by Bismarck in the *Hamburger Nachrichten* and quoted by Munroe Smith (*Militarism and Statecraft*, pp. 125 and 127), is as follows:

In view of our fortifications in Strassburg, Metz, Mayence, and Coblenz, Field Marshal Moltke was so convinced of the strength of our military position on the western front that he regarded it as possible, in case war should break out on two fronts, that we should limit ourselves to the defensive on the western frontier until the Russian war was conducted to an end. He was of the opinion that, with our railroad communications and fortifications on the western frontier, the French could not so conduct the war as to break through our lines; and he accordingly believed that we could carry the Russian war to a conclusion and then first, as against France, pass over from the defensive to the attack.

This revelation of Bismarck, published on January 9, 1893, aroused considerable controversy in Germany; whereupon one week later he replied and at the same time set forth his own opinion:

It is an indisputable fact that Count Moltke expressed himself in this sense, and that he was of the opinion that Germany, in possession of Metz and Strassburg, with Mayence, Cologne, and Coblenz behind, could, in case of a double war, maintain the defensive against France for an indefinite time and meanwhile employ its chief force in the East. . . . We should regard it as presumptuous to attempt to support the views of the great strategist with our own opinion; but in face of the skeptical articles published in the *Nationalzeitung* and other similar utterances in the press we should like to add that, so long as we are in possession of Metz and Strassburg and so long as we remain covered by the neutral Belgian and Luxemburg territory, a defensive conduct by Germany of the war against France would not deprive the left bank of the Rhine, but only a part of Alsace, of protection by German troops.

Commenting on these statements, Professor Munroe Smith



As to the German defeat at the Marne, Lieutenant-General Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven, Deputy Chief of the German Imperial Staff, in his book entitled *Deductions from the World War*, page 94, says:

Thus the German offensive at the beginning of September, 1914, was not powerful enough to effect the overthrow of the enemy. The intention was to effect an envelopment from two sides. The envelopment by the left wing of the army was, however, brought to a standstill before the fortifications of the French eastern frontier, which, in view of the prompt success achieved against the Belgian fortifications, it had been hoped to overcome. The envelopment of the French left wing was successful up to in front of Paris and across the Marne, but here the German troops found their frontal advance arrested, while they in their turn were threatened with an envelopment.

And again, page 91, he says:

When the German Western Army engaged in the battle of the Marne, its original first line troops had

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says: "In 1914 the German General Staff, with another Moltke at its head, put into execution an opposite plan. It was stated to be self-evident that France must be crushed before the 'slow-moving Russian masses' could make any effective attack upon the Central Empires. To achieve this object, the cover of Belgian neutrality was sacrificed. The attack on France was launched across that neutral territory, as offering the line of least resistance."

been reduced not only by two army corps which had been sent to the East, but also by two further army corps which it had been necessary to leave behind at Antwerp and Maubeuge.

Thus we see that the German plan was to envelop both flanks of the French Army<sup>1</sup> and that it failed because of the "fortifications of the French eastern frontier." That is to say, it failed because of the natural fortification of the Vosges Mountains and the fortresses of Verdun, Toul, Épinal, and Belfort; but particularly because of Belfort, which commands the narrow pass into France between the Vosges and Jura range of mountains. Had the Germans been able to capture this fortress, the way would have been opened for turning the Vosges Mountains and the fortresses of Épinal, Toul, and Verdun, and for the envelopment of the French

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<sup>1</sup> The plan of an envelopment of both flanks was one of which Count Schlieffen, the elder Moltke's successor as Chief of Staff, had been the leading proponent in Germany. He held that this was the only kind of plan which would ensure the total destruction of the enemy. Thus it became a favorite with German strategists. Strategically it was sound, provided conditions were favorable, but for its success it was necessary, first, that the configuration of the theater of operations should permit of its execution; and, secondly, that there should be a sufficiently preponderating force to make the envelopments without weakening, and thereby endangering, the center of the attacking army. But in the great German offensive on the Western Front, neither of these conditions was fulfilled.

right wing, which, with the left wing and the little British and Belgian armies already enveloped, would no doubt have resulted in the final surrender of the French Army and the capture of Paris.

This accomplished, their next step would have been to cross the English Channel. With their submarines, aeroplanes, and Zeppelins, to protect their transports from attack in crossing, and with no army of any consequence in Great Britain at that time to repel the invaders, it seems not improbable that they would have been successful, although their losses might have been considerable. In Great Britain's poor state of preparedness at that time, and with the flower of her regular troops already destroyed in France, probably less than half a million veteran German troops would have been able to overrun the island, capture London, and conquer Great Britain.

Then, of course, they would have taken over the British Navy; and with the French Navy already taken over, and their own navy and submarines, they probably would have provoked war with the United States and made

short work of the American Navy. With it out of the way there would have been nothing to prevent their transports, loaded with their best troops, from crossing the Atlantic; and with practically no army in the United States to meet them they could easily have taken possession of a good part of the North Atlantic Seaboard States, captured New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington, and compelled these cities to indemnify Germany for the entire cost of the war.

It is easy to see now that at the battle of the Marne Germany was within a hair's breadth of conquering France; and that this most probably would have speedily led to her conquering Great Britain and the United States and her domination of the world. *But Belfort stood in the way.*

So important was this fact, so fraught was it with momentous consequences, that it may be interesting to inquire how it happened that Germany did not insist on taking over the French fortress of Belfort at the end of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71; for had she held it in 1914, victory would certainly have crowned her efforts in the first great battle of the Marne.

The circumstances were these: Paris capitulated on January 28, 1871, and an armistice of twenty-one days was signed, to date from January 31; it was later extended to midnight of February 26. During the armistice, the German Army was not to enter Paris. Heroically, Belfort was still holding out.

On February 21, Thiers, representing France, went to Versailles to get the best terms he could from Bismarck. Bismarck's terms were, that France was to pay an indemnity of six thousand million francs; to give up the whole of Alsace and a considerable part of Lorraine, including the fortresses of Strassburg, Metz, and Belfort; and that the German Army was to enter Paris and to remain there until the ratification of peace.<sup>1</sup> To these terms Thiers strongly protested, claiming that the indemnity was exorbitant and that the cession of Metz would make the two nations enemies forever. He particularly objected to the German troops entering Paris and insisted on France keeping Belfort if Strassburg had to be given up. The discussion lasted several days. Bismarck was obdurate;

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<sup>1</sup> Simon, *The Government of M. Thiers*, vol. 1, p. 133.

but finally Thiers' eloquence, emotion, zeal, patriotism, and fire moved him to consult the Emperor and von Moltke as to a slight modification of the terms. The Emperor consented to a reduction of the indemnity from six to five thousand million francs,<sup>1</sup> but von Moltke insisted that Germany must have Metz, as it would be worth one hundred thousand men to her in case of a war with France.<sup>2</sup> As to the entrance of the troops into Paris, Bismarck offered to yield this, if Thiers would consent to give up Belfort without further objection. But Thiers persisted in retaining Belfort. Feeling that to yield it would leave the eastern frontier of France open to invasion, he fought for it most strenuously, offering even to consent to the German troops entering Paris provided Belfort could be retained by France. "Nothing," said Thiers, in the course of his long and eloquent plea, "can equal the grief which Paris must feel in opening the gates of its unconquered walls to the enemy who has been unable to force them. Therefore we have besought you, and do

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<sup>1</sup> *The Government of M. Thiers*, vol. 1, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of M. de Blowitz*, p. 144.

still beseech you, not to inflict this unmerited humiliation upon the city. Nevertheless it is ready to drink the cup to the dregs, so that one bit of its soil and an heroic city may be preserved to the country. We thank you, Count, for having afforded Paris the opportunity of ennobling its sacrifice. The mourning of Paris shall be the ransom of Belfort.”<sup>1</sup> On this point Bismarck finally yielded and Belfort was retained by France. Thiers’ pleadings saved the day. With the fire of a great patriot in his soul, his eloquence, nearly fifty years ago, saved his beloved France from destruction in 1914. It did more—it changed the destinies of many peoples and many nations, crushed out autocracy, and crumbled into dust most of the thrones of Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Favre, *Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale*, vol. 3, p. 106.

## CHAPTER II

### GERMANY'S SECOND GREAT MISTAKE

OF COURSE, at the time of this writing, early in the year, 1919, no accurate figures as to the strength of the armies on the Western Front at various periods can be obtained; nevertheless, an approximation, which will answer the purpose for an analysis and a discussion of the strategy on the Western Front, may be obtained by a comparison of different estimates and statements.

It is generally admitted by both sides that at the battle of the Marne the Allies considerably outnumbered the Germans. *The Times History of the War*, volume II, page 51, estimates the Allies at rather more than two million and the Germans at rather less than two million, and states that of combatants actually engaged in the battle there were probably three million in all.

Lieutenant-General Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven, Deputy Chief of the German Imperial



Staff, in his book, *Deductions from the World War*, pages 90 and 91, says:

At the beginning of the war of 1914 the armed force of France alone was slightly in excess of the whole mobilized strength of Germany, while if we deduct the German forces employed in the East and those which were in the first instance kept at home for coast defense, the French, English, and Belgians possessed a numerical superiority of something like three-quarters of a million men.

After the battle of the Marne the strength of the field forces of the Allies on the Western Front was increased and of Germany decreased up to September 1, 1915, when the numbers, according to the estimate of Frank H. Simonds in the *American Review of Reviews* for October, 1915, were as follows:

	Allies	Germans
French .....	2,000,000	
British .....	750,000	1,500,000
Belgian .....	100,000	
	<hr/>	
	2,850,000	

But if such a great inequality in numbers between the Allies and the Germans did exist at that time, it was not continued long; for, some time afterwards, but prior to the attack on Ver-

dun in the following February, a number of German divisions were transferred from the Eastern to the Western Front. Just how many is not accurately known, but probably about a quarter million of men. But, at any rate, it seems to be generally admitted that there was not a sufficient number transferred to make Germany's strength on the Western Front anywhere near equal to that of the Allies at the time of the attack on Verdun. Indeed, it would seem that at the time of this attack the Allies must have outnumbered the Germans by at least half a million men.

For a year and a half following the attack at Verdun, the Allies seem to have outnumbered the Germans by several hundred thousand; but the total collapse of Russia in November, 1917, permitted Germany to strengthen greatly her forces on the Western Front early in the year 1918. On March 16, 1918, just five days prior to the great attack begun by the Germans towards Amiens, Colonel Herbert Slocum, Military Attaché at London, reported the number of combatant forces on the Western Front to be:

	Divi- sions	Battal- ions	Rifle Strength	Artillery
British .....	58	555	600,000	5,892
French .....	97 <sup>1</sup>	915	764,000	9,806
American .....	4 <sup>2</sup>	48	49,000	316
Belgian .....	6	108	64,000	598
Portuguese .....	2	24	26,000	68
<hr/>				
Total Allies...	167	1,650	1,503,000	16,680
Total Enemy..	186	1,700	1,370,000	15,734

But evidently a number of German divisions that had recently arrived or were *en route* were not included in this report; for on May 25, Colonel Slocum reported the numbers as follows:

	Divi- sions	Battal- ions	Rifle Strength	Artillery
British .....	50	495	520,000	6,247
French .....	103	964	674,000	10,103
American .....	5	60	65,000	458
Belgian .....	6	108	56,000	699
Italian .....	2	24	16,000	100
<hr/>				
Total Allies...	166	1,651	1,331,000	17,607
Total Enemy..	208	1,914	1,654,926	17,168

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<sup>1</sup> Two French dismounted cavalry divisions were not included.

<sup>2</sup> There were at that time 5½ American divisions in France; 3 of the 4 referred to above were still under instruction.

This would indicate that on May 25, 1918, Germany had on the line a preponderance of about 300,000 trained fighting men; but this only takes into account 65,000 Americans out of more than 700,000 then in France. Of the 1,019,115 which Secretary Baker reported as having been sent to France prior to July, 1918, fully half were ready to take their places on the firing line by the end of August. In August, September, and October nearly a million more men were sent to France; so that by November 1 there were nearly two million American soldiers in France, of whom probably one-half or thereabouts were ready to take their places on the firing line. All of which clearly indicates that the Allies had a considerable preponderance of fighting men and guns on the Western Front since July 1, 1918.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "On April 1, 1918, the Germans had an actual superiority of 324,000 riflemen on the Western Front. Their strength increased during the next two months but began to drop during June. At the same time the Allied strength, with the constantly growing American forces, was showing a steady increase, so that the two lines [lines drawn to show the rifle strength of Allied and German Armies on the Western Front] crossed during June. From that time on Allied strength was always in the ascendancy and since the French and British forces were weaker in October and November than they were in April and May, this growing ascendancy of the Allies was due entirely to the Americans. By November 1 the Allied rifle strength had a

As a result of the battle of the Marne the German Army was halted, turned back, forced to dig in and take up a defensive rôle, which brought Germany's offensive on the Western Front to an end for the time being. For about a year and a half she continued to act defensively there; and although she was considerably outnumbered by the Allies during this period, she held the front easily.

In the meantime she took the offensive in force against her enemies in other parts of the theater of war. And having in these operations made a gigantic and successful campaign against the Russians and a marvelously successful one against the Serbians, she determined to make another powerful effort to break through the Western Front and resume a war of movement.

Just why she changed her plan from the defensive to the offensive on the Western Front before she had entirely disposed of her enemies in Russia, Serbia, and Italy is not fully under-

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superiority over the German of more than 600,000 rifles." — Colonel Leonard P. Ayres, Chief of the Statistical Branch of the General Staff, U. S. Army, in *The War with Germany; A Statistical Summary*, pp. 104 and 105.

stood. But the probable reason is that she felt the necessity of making another great effort there before Great Britain could complete the organization and training of her great army and make it ready for operations in France. And since Germany's victories in the East and in the Balkans had greatly encouraged her and would enable her to transport a number of the veteran and victorious divisions of her Eastern armies to the Western Front; and since the fall of the fortresses of Liege, Antwerp, and Maubeuge, resulting from the fire of the big Austrian and German guns, had demonstrated that fortresses in this war were of little account in the reckoning; and not knowing that the French had already learned this lesson and moved their great guns from their forts to concealed positions, she hoped to meet with better success this time in breaking through on the Western Front. At any rate, she purposed trying it, and in February, 1916, began her great attack against Verdun.

This attack was one of the most sustained and formidable in history. For five months the German Crown Prince tried to break through the

line at this point. In repeated and most desperate assaults, at the expense of enormous losses in life, he hurled his divisions against the French; but all his efforts were in vain. The line held. Verdun remained in possession of the French, and all the blood spilt by the German soldiers in that mighty effort went for naught.

And it was all a mistake, another great blunder; for with the same effort here spent, and probably a far less loss of life, Germany could in turn have completed her victories on the Eastern Front, destroyed the army at Salonica, and captured that important seaport; then with greatly superior forces have struck and crushed the Italian Army; and then, with all her enemies disposed of outside of France and Belgium, have returned to the Western Front with an enormous preponderance of forces, elated by great victories, for a campaign against her enemies there. And even had she not been able to do all this, she would have been able to do a great part of it; which would have brought her just so much nearer to a final victory, instead of having been brought, as she actually was, by

her great failure and sacrifices at Verdun, just so much nearer to final defeat.

The two fundamental facts upon which all strategy is based are, first, that an army in order to live and fight must have food, clothing, equipment, ammunition, weapons, and reinforcements; and secondly, that these supplies and men must be brought to it over its lines of communication. These lines of communication running from its front to its bases of operation and supply are its nerves and its arteries and veins; sever them, and you destroy the army; even threaten them, and serious consequences are apt to follow. Hence it follows that the commander-in-chief of an army must ever keep a watchful eye upon them and be ever ready to protect them against any attack or threatened attack. But simply the protection of his own communications is not enough. If he expects to accomplish anything great in war, he must do much more than this: he must, if possible, so plan his operations, so direct his attacks, as to threaten or destroy his adversary's communications. It is then that a victory on the battlefield will bring with it momentous results.



But on the Western Front it was impossible for either army to turn or outflank the other and strike its communications, since the fronts of each rested on the neutral country of Switzerland at one end and on the English Channel at the other. Hence it was by frontal attack only that either army could hope to break through and resume a war of movement; and since each was determined to prevent the other from breaking through, each constructed strong lines of intrenchments, with machine-gun emplacements, wire entanglements, and other accessories.

The difficulty of breaking through these strongly entrenched lines was increased by the employment on each side of the new war weapon, the aeroplane, which enabled the air scouts to sail over and beyond the enemy's line and to see and report any concentration of his forces. This knowledge enabled the commanding general of the opposing army to assemble his reserves opposite the threatened sector of his line in order to repulse the attack. In other words, the element of surprise, which in so many of the great battles of history has

been such an important factor in determining results, could not, as formerly, be made use of in the face of these new war weapons. Of course, the aeroplane has not entirely eliminated the chance of surprise, but it has made it, even in a small way, very difficult of attainment.

A glance at the map of the railways of Germany, France, and Belgium shows that the most numerous and most important lines are those that traverse the country from east to west. Fourteen lines of track cross the Rhine between Switzerland and Holland. In addition to these main lines, two parallel lines, separated by the Rhine, follow its course north and south and many other cross lines connect the towns of the east and west lines with each other. In Germany the double track lines are much more numerous than in France and Belgium; some railways, indeed, having four parallel tracks. The chief difference between the countries is especially noticeable in the extraordinary development that the Germans had given to their connecting and crossing railways between stations and to platforms for loading and to the number of strategic railways near the frontier that

they had built largely for purely military purposes.

The most important lines of communication of the combatant armies as they stood on the Western Front from Belfort on the border of Switzerland, through Verdun, Reims, and St. Quentin, to Nieuport on the English Channel, were the east and west railways which run from Paris in turn to Vienna, to Prague, to Berlin, and to Hamburg. They lie in a direction generally at right angles to the Western Front and cross the Rhine at Neuenburg, Breisach, Strassburg, Germersheim, Speyer (Spires), Mannheim, Mayence (Mainz), Coblenz, Bonn, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Rheinhausen, Ruhrort, Wesel, and other places.

Numbered from the south, the main railways are:

First: The line from Paris to Vienna *via* Belfort, Mülhausen, Schaffhausen, Ulm, Augsburg, and Munich.

Second: The line from Paris to Vienna *via* Châlons, Nancy, Strassburg, Karlsruhe, Stuttgart, and Munich.

Third: The line from Paris to Prague *via*

Châlons, Verdun, Metz, Saarbrücken, Germersheim, Heilbronn, and Nüremberg.

Fourth: The line from Paris to Dresden *via* Château-Thierry, Verdun, Metz, Mayence, Frankfurt, and Leipzig.

Fifth: The line from Paris to Berlin *via* Laon, Mézières, Thionville (Diedenhofen), Treves, Coblenz, Giessen, Cassel, and Magdeburg. The part of this line which passes through the winding valley of the Moselle from Thionville to Coblenz is a strategic railway constructed since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 for the purpose of transporting German troops and material in case of war with France. It joins the network of lines that the German Military Staff has built about Metz in the past few years and is the last in the series of communications by which Germany was able to penetrate France without traversing Luxemburg or Belgium.

Sixth: The line from Paris to Berlin *via* Laon, Mézières, Maubeuge, Namur, Liege, Aix-la-Chapelle, Cologne, Barmen, Werden, and Magdeburg.

Seventh: The line from Paris to Berlin *via*

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Laon, Hirson, Maubeuge, Namur, Liege, Aix-la-Chapelle, Düsseldorf, Hamm, and Magdeburg.

Eighth: The line from Paris to Berlin *via* Compiègne, St. Quentin, Maubeuge, Namur, Liege, Aix-la-Chapelle, Duisburg, Essen, Hamm, and Hanover.

Ninth: The line from Paris to Hamburg *via* Montdidier, Cambrai, Mons, Charleroi, Namur, Liege, Aix-la-Chapelle, Wesel, and Bremen.

As to these last four lines, it will be noted that all merge into one line in passing through Namur, Liege, and Aix-la-Chapelle; and that there is no other east and west line to the southward until the Mézières-Sedan-Thionville Railway south of the Ardennes is reached.

Various important railway lines also connect the principal towns of France and Belgium with Calais, Boulogne, and other Channel ports.

The Germans obtained their supplies, munitions, and reinforcements over the railways extending eastward from the Western Front into Germany; the French, theirs over those extending westward and south-westward from the Western Front to Paris, which was their

great manufacturing and distributing center; and the English, theirs over those leading back from their lines on the Western Front to Calais and Boulogne and other Channel ports. Supplies landed at Le Havre and Brest and a number of other French ports, for the use of the Allied armies, were mostly sent to Paris for distribution.

After America came into the war in April, 1917, other new lines of communication and supply were established for the American forces. They extended from behind the Western Front in the vicinity of St. Mihiel, just south of Verdun, westward, southwestward, and southward across France to the principal American points of debarkation at St. Nazaire, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, and Marseille.

For three years and a half after the battle of the Marne, the line of the Western Front separating the opposing armies in France and Belgium was, with the exception of a slight change made in it as a result of the battle of the Somme, practically stationary; and was in shape like an elongated letter S, the upper part northwest of Verdun, bulging towards Paris, the lower

part southeast of Verdun, towards Strassburg. Such was the shape of the Western Front when the great attack was made at Verdun in February, 1916.

Inasmuch as Verdun was one of the strongest points of the entire front, and well known to be such by the Germans, the question naturally arises why did the German General Staff select that point for attack, and why did they sacrifice so many men in repeated and fruitless efforts to break through the French front there?

The answer is, that the French front from Verdun to Reims, was the only sector of the whole line where the Germans could by breaking through cut off the communications of a large part of the French Army with Paris. Strategically then this sector of the line was the place to strike.

It might appear that had the attempt been made to break through westward of Verdun, near Reims, it would have met with better success; but even if it had, so long as Verdun itself held out, it is evident that the break could not have been sufficiently widened to make it safe for a German army to pass through. In order,

therefore, to carry out this plan successfully, it was absolutely necessary that Verdun itself be taken; and had it been taken, the gap towards Reims easily could have been widened.

It is evident that had this plan been successfully carried out, it would have produced momentous results; for a break through this sector of the line and an advance through Châlons and Ste. Menehould towards Troyes and Chaumont, would have severed the communications with Paris of the entire right wing of the French Army, which was occupying the line from Verdun to Belfort. Having broken through it, the Germans might have taken either of two courses: They might have left a containing force<sup>1</sup> to hold the right wing of the French Army, while they moved westward with their remaining forces to envelop Paris; or they might have left a containing force to hold the French forces towards Paris, while they closed in with their remaining forces on the French

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<sup>1</sup> " *Containing Force:* " A body of troops charged with the duty of holding in check a body (generally numerically superior) of the enemy, while the main efforts of the army are directed against another portion of the hostile forces.—  
WAGNER.



right wing and captured it. They would probably have followed the latter plan, since the whole right wing of the French Army, with its communications severed and a powerful German force pressing it in front, could not have escaped capture. This accomplished, practically all the German forces in front of, as well as in rear of, the French right wing would then have been released to assist in enveloping and capturing the French forces about Paris.

The consequences of a German victory at Verdun would have been immense, for it would have meant the destruction of France, perhaps the conquering of the world. Thus it was that the Germans made such mighty efforts to break through the French front there. At first their formidable blows proved irresistible and led to the capture of a large part of the fortified area about Verdun and of the important outlying forts of Douaumont and Vaux. They were most persistent; again and again for a period of five months they brought their troops to the attack, until the very ravines ran red with blood. It seemed as if they might succeed in spite of their immense losses; for they appeared

ready and willing to sacrifice any number of men in order to gain a few yards of ground.

It was a critical period in the world's history; the outlook was portentous; free government was trembling in the balance. And to those who understood the strategy of the situation, the mighty assaults on Verdun filled their hearts with dread akin to despair, lest the Germans should break through and all would be lost. But the French soldiers, the indomitable French soldiers, inspired by their great fighter, Pétain, barred the way and hurled them back; and France was saved; and the friends of freedom once more took courage.

## CHAPTER III

### GERMANY'S THIRD GREAT MISTAKE

SINCE Germany saw, after the failure of her great attack at Verdun, that there was no longer any hope of breaking through the Western Front and resuming a war of movement, she again reverted to her former plan of holding the front defensively with a sufficient force to prevent the Allies from breaking through, and with her available forces took the offensive successively against Russia, Roumania, Italy, and again against Russia; and, largely as a result of carrying out this plan, was wholly or partly successful against each. Had she continued in this way to mass her forces in turn against the Allied armies at Salonica and in Italy, she would most probably, with considerably less effort than she later spent in attempting to break through on the Western Front, have conquered or annihilated or captured both armies.

With the Salonica Army defeated, the German and Austrian armies could have quickly overrun and occupied Greece; and with the Italian Army defeated, they could have occupied the valley of the Po, rich in agriculture and manufactories, and have pushed forward to the French and Maritime Alps; and might have been able to break through the Maritime Alps and invade France *via* Nice. And even had Germany been stopped there, she easily could have held temporarily the line of the French Alps, and thence southward to the sea, as well as the line of the Western Front, while she was organizing and bringing into her system all the conquered countries. Master of Italy, Greece, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Roumania, Bulgaria, Austria, Russia, and the greater part of Turkey, her dominion would have been mightier than was that of Napoleon at the height of his power.

Having reached such success as here set forth, she would have been in a position to forestall the landing of any expedition in the Balkans from the Aegean Sea, in Austria from the Adriatic, or in Turkey from the eastern Medi-

terranean; or, had it been landed, would have been favorably situated militarily for concentrating a greatly superior force against it and destroying it before it could have gained a foothold and advanced into the interior.

For some reason Germany did not continue to carry out this plan; but decided to renew the offensive on the Western Front; and with this end in view began on March 21, 1918, a little more than two years from the time of beginning the attack on Verdun, a powerful attack against the Allied line opposite Amiens, and then followed it up by a like attack against the British line in the vicinity of Ypres, and two other similar attacks against the French line between Reims and Montdidier, towards Château-Thierry. By massing overwhelming forces against sectors of the line in these attacks, Germany succeeded in pushing it back thirty-five miles opposite Amiens, thirty miles to Château-Thierry, and about ten miles in the vicinity of Ypres; but in no case was she able to break completely through the line and resume a war of movement.

Just why Germany made such a complete and

momentous change in her whole strategical plan in March, 1918, is not now fully known; but the principal reasons for the change are probably as follows:

First: Because she felt that she must make a supreme effort for victory on the Western Front before the American troops arrived there in large numbers.

Second: Because the German commanders, having discovered that the British had built very few if any lines of entrenchments behind certain sectors of their line, and had very few reserves behind them, hoped by attacking these weak sectors with greatly superior forces, which had become available as a result of the collapse and disintegration of the Russian armies, to be able to break through them and resume a war of movement.

Third: Because the military authorities, by a study of General von Hutier's plan of attacking, based upon his experience in the capture of Riga, and their easy success in driving back the British troops after the British victory at Cambrai, had become convinced that the best way to break through an entrenched line was not to

pound themselves forward by a succession of small attacks, as they had attempted to do at Verdun, and as the British had done at the Somme, but to assemble their divisions in overwhelming force against a long sector of the enemy's line and gathering up all their implements and methods of destruction, to move forward on an extended front and strike with their utmost power.

Since the strategical situation on the Western Front during this time had not changed, the question arises: Why did not Germany make the second effort to break the Allied front along the Verdun-Reims sector, instead of making it along the Somme sector from La Fère to Arras? The answer is, that although strategically the Verdun-Reims sector was the better place to break through, tactically it was the more difficult. Bitter experience had already taught Germany that it would be impossible to break through this sector of the line. Then, again, Germany must have known that a large portion of the French reserves were at this time in Champagne south of Reims and that very few, if any, were in rear of the Somme sector. And

she doubtless knew, too, that the British had constructed few, if any, lines of intrenchments behind this sector after the battle of the Somme; and that they had taken over only recently that portion of the sector south of St. Quentin; and, as yet, had not had time to make complete arrangements for holding it. Then, too, the Germans knew that the dividing line separating the French from the British armies crossed this sector at its southern end; and that there was as yet no commander-in-chief of the Allied armies on the Western Front, each army having thus far in the war acted to a great extent independently; facts which could not but prevent that full unity of command between them, so essential to success. All of these considerations no doubt led the Germans to choose this sector for their great attack.

Their plan evidently was to throw an enormous force against this fifty miles of British front and to open a gap between the British and French armies, forcing, if possible, the British back on the English Channel and the French back upon Paris; then to contain one army while they settled with the other.



As to whether, if successful, they would have proceeded first against the British and attempted to throw them back on the Channel ports and captured them; or against the French and attempted to envelop, defeat, and capture them and the French capital, is not now known; and, perhaps, was not known by them at the time; for they may have intended awaiting future developments before making a decision.

But it may be remarked here that it probably would have been better for the Germans to settle with the British first; since to proceed against the French about Paris while this large British Army was in their rear and threatening their lines of communication back through France and Belgium would have been highly dangerous.

Although the great attack begun by the Germans on March 21, 1918, failed to separate the British from the French armies, it forced the Allied line back a distance of about thirty-five miles, producing an immense salient opposite Amiens whose base was about fifty miles in extent; and it had the immediate effect also of changing the slightly curved front between Ver-

dun and the English Channel into an angular front which extended from Verdun in a generally western direction past Noyon to a point about one mile south of Montdidier and thence in a generally northern direction to Nieuport on the English Channel. This change from a curved to an angular front, as well as the creation of the salient opposite Amiens, not only made a vast difference in the strategical situation of the combatant armies, but it had the immediate effect of bringing about greater unity of action between the Allies, by causing them to select General Ferdinand Foch as commander-in-chief. It is purposed to discuss each of these changes separately and in detail under the headings: An Angular Front; A Salient; and Unity of Command.

#### AN ANGULAR FRONT

Occupying that portion of the theater of war within the angular front, the Germans had the advantage of interior lines, which enabled them to mass a superior force upon either the western or southern portion of their front much more quickly and easily than could the Allies on the

outside of the angular front assemble a sufficient force to meet it.

But, on the other hand, this angular front gave to the Allies a great strategical advantage, in that, if they should break through on either part of the front it would so threaten the communications of the Germans attacking on the other as to compel them to turn back to save their communications. In other words, it gave the Allies the opportunity of carrying out that great principle of strategy of striking at their adversary's communications without exposing their own; for it mattered not whether they should strike northward from the Reims-Verdun front toward Mézières and Sedan or eastward from the Amiens-Arras-Lens front toward Hirson and Maubeuge, in either case they would sever a considerable number of the German lines of communication and threaten seriously the remainder without in the least exposing their own to a German attack.

This advantage which the Allies possessed, had they had the strength or genius to make use of it, far surpassed the advantage which the Germans possessed as a result of their

central position and interior lines. The reason for this is that an attack made directly through the lines upon the German communications would not only have effectually put a stop at once to their advance, but would have placed them in a most precarious situation and compelled them to turn back to fight for the recovery of their lost or threatened communications.

To illustrate: Suppose that at the time the Germans began their great attack of March 21, or a day or two afterwards, the French with their reserves massed in Champagne had been prepared to make a great attack northward from the Reims-Verdun front and had broken through a considerable distance, very much as the Germans broke through in their great push toward Amiens, and had cut the east and west railways south of the Ardennes Mountains, what would have been the result? The answer is, that the Germans would have been compelled to stop their advance, turn back, and either fight to recover the lost railways or try to escape from the pocket in which this maneuver had placed them, by retreating northeastward

and gaining the Charleroi-Namur-Liege-Aix-la-Chapelle Railway.

If to this the reply be made that the Argonne Forest, just north of the Reims-Verdun front, was such a difficult country to operate in, and so strongly fortified and held, that little headway could have been made through it, the answer is that the Americans afterwards forced themselves through it in the face of a most desperate resistance; and that a powerful attack on this vital part of the angular front, even if it had not made much headway, would nevertheless have compelled the Germans to halt their leading divisions and send back many of them to stop the French advance, just as a few months later they were forced to send them back to try to stop the onrush of the American soldiers.

The maxim or principle of war which applies in these cases is, that where two armies are maneuvering against each other's communications, or are attacking each other, that army whose communications are the more seriously threatened will invariably abandon any effort to press on and will fall back to fight for its com-

munications. "The importance of this fact," says Hamley, "is immense; for the commander who finds himself on his enemy's rear, while his own is still beyond his adversary's reach, may cast aside all anxiety for his own communications, and call up every detachment to the decisive point, certain that the enemy will abandon his own designs in order, if possible, to retrieve his position."<sup>1</sup>

There are, it is believed, no exceptions in history to this maxim, save in a few cases where the commanding general had decided to give up his communications because he had established, or planned to establish, new ones; as Napoleon did at Austerlitz,<sup>2</sup> where he made no effort to fight to preserve his threatened communications back southward through Vienna, because he had already prepared new ones westward through Bohemia, which he could have used in case of defeat; or as Sherman did in the Atlanta campaign, where he made no effort to fight for his communications back to Chattanooga, upon Hood's marching rearward from Sherman's

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<sup>1</sup> Hamley, *The Operations of War*, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> Sargent, *Napoleon Bonaparte's First Campaign*, pp. 186 and 187.

front to cut them, because he had decided to cut loose from them and march to the sea, where he would establish, and did establish, a new base for future operations.

It would appear that had the Allies been in a condition to strike at the communications of the Germans by breaking through the line on one side or the other of the angular front, there was offered them strategically a most favorable opportunity for success, since the Germans in their great attacks invariably selected the front behind which there were few Allied reserves for massing their own reserves preparatory to making the attempt to break through, thus necessarily weakening proportionately their own front behind which the Allied reserves were massed, and thereby making it the very front on which an Allied offensive would most probably succeed.

But, as a matter of fact, nothing of this kind was attempted. On the contrary, when the Germans made their attack on March 21, 1918, the Allied reserves in Champagne, and such other reserves as could be collected, were hurried around the angular front with all possible speed

to stop the German advance on Amiens; then when the Germans made their second great attack south of Ypres on April 9, the reserves were hurried northward to that point to help save the British, who in a critical situation with "their backs to the wall" were fighting desperately to keep themselves from being driven into the sea; then when the Germans made their third great attack on May 27, upon Château-Thierry, and for the second time in the war reached the Marne, the reserves were hurriedly sent to that front to check the Germans and keep them from cutting off the French right wing and from finally reaching Paris.

Why were all the Allied efforts to stop the Germans during these four months, from March 21 until July 18, when Foch began his great offensive, confined entirely to defensive operations? Until fuller details of the situation become known this question cannot be satisfactorily answered; but probably the failure of the Allies to appoint a commander-in-chief prior to the great German offensive of March 21 had much to do with it; for it must be remembered that it takes time to prepare for an offensive,



and that "the transition from the defensive to the offensive is," according to Napoleon, "one of the most delicate operations of war."<sup>1</sup> Of course, the aim of the Allies during these four critical months was to hold the Germans until America could transport sufficient men to France to give the Allies a preponderance of fighting troops. But whether this purely defensive strategy, which seems to have been the Allied plan up to the counter-attack begun by General Foch on July 18, was as effective in gaining the result sought as defensive-offensive strategy would have been is questionable.

As to waiting for preponderating forces before beginning an offensive, there is this to be said in its favor: since the Americans were sending to France on an average of more than two hundred thousand soldiers a month the Allies would soon considerably outnumber the Germans. But did this justify their waiting during these critical months for preponderating forces? Perhaps so! At any rate, it succeeded. Nevertheless, it is well to remember that great soldiers have seldom deemed it necessary, even

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<sup>1</sup> General Burnod, *Napoleon's Maxims of War*, p. 50.

in critical times, to wait for preponderating forces before undertaking offensive operations; and that, not infrequently, such operations have led to the greatest victories. A vastly preponderating force against Robert E. Lee did not prevent him and his great lieutenant, "Stonewall" Jackson, from winning the battle of Chancellorsville; nor did it prevent Bonaparte in his first Italian campaign, although greatly outnumbered at all times in the theater of war, from bringing a superior force upon practically every battlefield and by so doing defeating and crushing one Sardinian and six Austrian armies sent successively against him.<sup>1</sup>

But until the facts are more fully known it is not safe to pronounce definite criticism on any of the operations of the Allies during these four critical months. Nevertheless, from what is known, and judging from the strategical ability shown by Marshal Foch in his subsequent operations on the Western Front and elsewhere as commander-in-chief, I am of the opinion that, had he been appointed commander-in-chief of the Allied armies a sufficient time prior to the

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<sup>1</sup> *Napoleon Bonaparte's First Campaign*, pp. 168 and 169.

great thrust toward Amiens, begun on March 21, 1918, to have formulated and worked out his plans for meeting the attacks, he would have put a stop to them much earlier than he did.

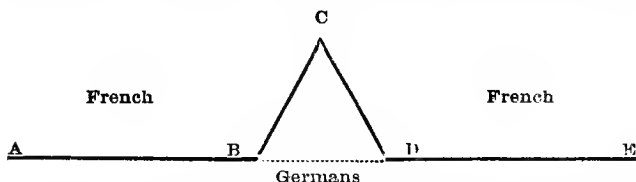
#### A SALIENT

We have seen how the Germans by massing overwhelming forces against weak sectors of the Allied front succeeded in forcing it back, in three cases, from ten to thirty-five miles, but in no place were they able to break completely through the line. The reason for this was, that in each instance, as they moved forward through the enemy's entrenched lines, they created a situation which made their own lines more and more vulnerable and harder and harder to defend. In other words, they created a salient.

A salient is vulnerable; its weak points strategically are along its sides near its base, because an attack in force there, by threatening the communications of the occupying troops, would, if successful, force their retreat.

Then, too, any advantage of a central position — of interior lines — that may be possessed

by troops occupying a salient is overbalanced by the advantage which the enemy has of interior lines within the angular fronts on each side of the salient. To illustrate: Let the line ABCDE represent the front between the two opposing armies. Now if, on account of their central position, the troops occupying the salient BCD have an advantage of interior lines,



it must be evident that such advantage is more than counter-balanced by the advantage of interior lines possessed by the opposing troops occupying the angles or counter-salients ABC and CDE.

But as a matter of fact, where a salient is small, or is well filled with troops, there is no strategical advantage for troops occupying it; on the contrary, there is a great strategical disadvantage; first, because they have too limited a space in which to maneuver; and secondly, because they are subject to a converging fire

from the enemy occupying the counter-salients. Troops within a salient are not infrequently so situated that long-range guns from one or the other side of it can enfilade or take them in reverse.

Then, too, the numerous roads and railways within a salient, although absolutely necessary for the movement of men and supplies, are strategically a source of weakness to the occupying troops, principally because they can be fired upon from many angles and often be enfiladed throughout long stretches by the guns of the troops occupying the counter-salients or by the guns at the nose of the salient. And the nature of the terrain, and direction and position of the roads within a salient, of course, influence greatly the strategical situation of the occupying troops, but these are special cases which would call for a special analysis.

Then, again, a salient is *per se* not only weak, but it weakens the whole front by greatly lengthening it, thus making it necessary to use many more troops to defend it. Thus the sides BC and CD would require more than twice the number of troops to defend them than would

the base BD, which was the line of the original front. And, naturally, when these salients are multiplied, the strength of the front becomes much weakened since its length becomes proportionately greatly increased. But, on the other hand, it should be borne in mind that the weakening is not confined to one side, since the front of the opposing army is correspondingly lengthened and likewise weakened.

It should, perhaps, be remarked here that the foregoing discussion of a salient has reference more particularly to what may be termed a strategical salient; that is to say, a salient large enough to include within it, roads, railways, and other means of communication, thus making it possible, and often practicable, for outside troops to make strategical moves and combinations against the troops occupying it. It is only in the past war that such salients have been developed; for the reason that then only have battle lines extended to such great lengths as to permit the development of great salients. In former wars, the salients have been small and, consequently, their weakness has been due almost solely to tactical consid-

erations. Tactically, other things being equal, the weakness of the salient to troops occupying it is in the main part due to the mathematical fact that you can put more men and guns on the outside of an angle to shoot into it than you can put on the inside to fire out. This is the chief reason why the "Peach Orchard" salient at Gettysburg was a weak point in the Federal line; the "Bloody Angle" at Spottsylvania a weak point in the Confederate line; and the nose of the great strategical salient of Château-Thierry a weak point in the German line. Tactically, each of the great German salients was weak at its nose; strategically, each was weak at its base.

Having pointed out the weakness of a salient to the side occupying it, attention is invited to the fact that, after the great German attack of March 21, 1918, upon Amiens had been checked, and prior to the German attack south of Ypres on April 9, 1918, there was offered a splendid opportunity for striking a telling blow at the base of the Amiens salient. Such a blow, could it have been made in sufficient force, would have threatened the communications of the troops

occupying it, and compelled them either to retire or to fight desperately to prevent the Allies from breaking through the salient at its base. In either case, the result would, no doubt, have put a stop to the attack south of Ypres, as well as to any further offensive by the Germans upon either side of the angular front.

But the failure of General Foch to take advantage of this opportunity to attack at the time, was no indication that he did not fully appreciate the vulnerability of the Amiens salient to an Allied attack. On the contrary, his subsequent masterly operations, beginning with his great counter-offensive against the Château-Thierry salient on July 18, 1918, and continuing until every German salient, including that of St. Mihiel, had been ironed out and the Germans driven back to the Hindenburg Line and even beyond, were indisputable proofs that he appreciated fully the weak points of the salients and knew where and how to attack them.

#### UNITY OF COMMAND

Up to and including the beginning of the great attack by the Germans in March, 1918,



there was no supreme commander of the Allied armies. Each army acted more or less independently; and as there was little or no co-ordination of their movements, serious consequences threatened. Especially was this true in the great German offensive in March. Then and there was seen the absolute necessity of a commander-in-chief of the Allied armies. As a result, on March 28, just one week after the beginning of this great offensive, General Ferdinand Foch, of the French Army, was appointed commander-in-chief.

Prior to this time there had been much opposition to such an appointment. As early as 1915, Lord Kitchener had suggested Allied co-ordination, but nothing was done in the matter. In July, 1917, at a conference of the chiefs of the Allied staffs of Great Britain, France, and Italy, a resolution was passed urging the necessity of unity of action, if success was to be achieved; but no commander-in-chief was appointed. Then in November, 1917, at a conference of the premiers of Great Britain, France, and Italy and the chiefs of staff of the Allied armies, held at Rapallo, near Genoa, Italy, the

appointment of a generalissimo, who should control all the Allied armies, was proposed; but Lloyd George, the British Premier, stated that he was utterly opposed to this plan. Accordingly, and as a sort of compromise, an Inter-Allied strategic board, to be known as the Supreme War Council, was created. It was to consist of the Prime Minister and a member of the government of each of the great Powers whose armies were fighting on the Western Fronts. Its first act was the creation of an Inter-Allied General Staff, consisting of General Foch of the French Army, Wilson of the British Army, and Cadorna of the Italian Army.

There was strong opposition in Great Britain and in the British Army to the creation of this Supreme War Council, principally on the ground that the proposals therein for obtaining unity of action would not only subordinate the military chiefs to political control, but were bound to be unworkable and militarily ineffective; and in the House of Commons on November 14, 1917, Lloyd George made this statement:

The Council will have no executive power, and final decision in the matter of strategy and the distribution and movements of the various armies in the field will rest with the several governments of the Allies. There will therefore be no operations department.

On November 18, 1917, President Wilson made public a cablegram to Colonel Edward M. House, in which he stated emphatically that the United States Government considers "unity of plan and control between the Allies and the United States essential," and asked him, with General Tasker H. Bliss, U. S. Army, as military adviser, to attend the first meeting of the Supreme War Council at Versailles, France, on December 1, 1917. This action of the President was understood as removing any doubts as to this Government's attitude towards the Supreme War Council. It was practically equivalent to giving it its unqualified endorsement.

On December 6, 1917, General Foch was relieved as French representative on the Inter-Allied General Staff of the Supreme War Council to become the military adviser of the French Premier, Clemenceau, and General Weygand was appointed in his place.

The third session of the Supreme War Council was held January 30 to February 2, 1918, at Versailles. From the official statement of the proceedings issued February 3, it appears that the decisions taken by the Council at this meeting "embrace not only a general military policy to be carried out by the Allies in all the principal theaters of war; but more particularly a closer and more effective co-ordination, under the Council, of all the efforts of the Powers engaged in the struggle against the Central Powers."

In the House of Commons on February 5, Andrew Bonar Law, Chancellor of the Exchequer, in reply to an inquiry, announced that no generalissimo had been appointed by the Council at this meeting; and on the same day it was announced from Washington that "for the present no assent to any policy or declaration involving considerations other than those purely military will be given by any American representative sitting with the Council until it first has been submitted to this Government and received its approval."

Thus it is seen that, notwithstanding the state-

ment of the British Premier, the Supreme War Council at this meeting proceeded to formulate the military policy which was to be carried out and that it was anxious for a closer and more effective co-ordination, not through the appointment of a generalissimo, but "under the Council" itself; and that the United States Government by implication gave its consent to any policy or declaration of the Council involving purely military considerations; but withheld its assent as to other considerations until they had been submitted to and approved by it.

But the important point of the whole matter is that no generalissimo, no commander-in-chief, was appointed; and that the supreme control of the Allied armies continued to remain in the hands of this Council and would probably have so remained indefinitely had not the great attack of the Germans in March made absolutely necessary the immediate appointment of a commander-in-chief.

Major-General Sir Frederick B. Maurice, of the British Army, says that at this session the Council "vested the supreme control of the Allied forces on the Western Front in an execu-

tive board composed of the representatives of the American, French, Italian, and British armies under the presidency of General Foch;” and that “this was in effect putting the higher command of the Allied operations in the hands of a committee.”<sup>1</sup>

But whether the higher command was to remain in the hands of the Supreme War Council itself or in the hands of the executive board appointed by it, matters not; for in either case failure was bound to result. History proves this: invariably when the supreme control of armies has been vested in a council, or committee, failure has resulted; for a decision by a council, or committee, means delay, discussion, compromise; and these are fatal in war. It must be evident that no party to a compromised decision could, if called upon to execute it, have full confidence in the result, since he would be certain to feel that his own proposal would be much better. In war there must be promptness of decision, singleness of purpose, boldness of action, confidence in one's own plan; to delay, to discuss, to compromise is to court defeat.

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice, in *Review of Reviews*, August, 1918, p. 158.

"To the Aulic Council," said Jomini in 1804, "Austria owes all her reverses since the time of Prince Eugene of Savoy."

It was fortunate for the Allies that they were wise enough to appoint General Foch commander-in-chief at the time they did, and not to leave the conduct of the campaign to this Supreme War Council. And it was unfortunate that they had not been wise enough to appoint him commander-in-chief when the question of unity of command was first raised; or, at least, to have appointed him before March 21, 1918, and by so doing have given him a chance to formulate his plans and make ready to meet that great attack.

In this connection, Napoleon's views upon the supreme importance of unity of command may not be out of place. In one of his maxims he has said: "Nothing is so important in war as an undivided command." And in his first Italian campaign, the most wonderful in many respects that has ever been fought, when the Directory, which was jealous of his brilliant success in Italy, proposed to put a check on his career by sending General Kellerman to share

with him the command of his victorious army, he submitted his resignation and wrote the Directory:

It is in the highest degree impolitic to divide the army of Italy; and it is equally contrary to the interests of the Republic to put over it two generals. . . . If you weaken your means by dividing your forces; if you break in Italy the unity of military thought, I tell you with sorrow, you will lose the finest opportunity that ever occurred of imposing laws on Italy. . . . Every one has his method of carrying on war. Kellerman has had more experience and may do it better than I. Together we should do nothing but harm. Your decision in this matter is of more importance than the fifteen thousand men the Emperor of Austria has sent to Beaulieu.

And to Carnot he wrote:

To associate Kellerman with me is to desire to lose all. I cannot serve willingly with a man who believes himself to be the best tactician of Europe; moreover, I believe one bad general to be preferable to two good ones. War is like government — a thing of tact.

Thus we see that Napoleon looked upon unity of command as the supreme essential in winning a war; that he regarded it of more importance than the reinforcements sent his adversary; and that so strong was his belief on



this point that he even declared that one bad general in command of an army was better than two good ones.

In no campaign in history has unity of command played a more important part than in this great World War. The operations of the Central Powers were directed by Germany. The supreme authority was the commander-in-chief of the German armies, who was advised and assisted by the German General Staff and his immediate staff officers. The Austrian, Turkish, and Bulgarian armies all obeyed this supreme authority. In consequence, there was among the Central Powers unity of command, resulting in unity of thought, unity of purpose, and unity of action. The result was that whenever a plan of operations was decided upon, all the resources and available military strength of the Central Powers were brought to bear to make it a success. To this unity of command was largely due the fact that Germany won such great victories in Russia, Italy, and the Balkans and, despite her stupendous strategical blunders, came near, on five occasions, to winning the war on the Western Front.

But on the side of the Allies there was for nearly four years neither a commander-in-chief nor any unity of action. Each of the Allied armies acted to a great extent independently of the others. There was little co-ordination between them, and such as there was, came about through mutual consent and not because it was in any way obligatory upon them. The result was that for four years the Allies were compelled to fight almost entirely on the defensive; and at the Marne, at Verdun, and in the great German thrusts of March 21, May 27, and July 15, 1918, came close to final defeat, although during much of that time they had a numerical superiority in fighting forces.

Of course the successes of the Central Powers cannot be attributed entirely to unity of command nor the reverses of the Allies entirely to a lack of it, but unquestionably it had much to do in determining these results; so much, indeed, that it is doubtful whether the war could have been won by the Allies without the appointment of a commander-in-chief.

One of the remarkable facts connected with this war is that it should have continued nearly

four years without a commander-in-chief of the Allied armies; and that in less than eight months after his appointment, it should have been brought to a close. Still more remarkable, perhaps, is the fact that the Allies should have permitted the war to continue for almost four years without making any serious attempt to appoint a commander-in-chief. The appointment, it is true, was considered and discussed by those in authority, but when they came to act, the nearest approach to it—until it was, so to speak, actually forced upon them by the great German drive of March 21—was to appoint a Supreme War Council.

But it does not necessarily follow that, had a commander-in-chief been appointed earlier, the war would have been ended sooner; for that would have depended upon the commander-in-chief selected. It is war that develops the genius of command and of generalship; and the selection of an Allied commander at the beginning of the war would have been no easy task. And yet, General Foch's brilliant operations in the first battle of the Marne clearly indicated that he would have been a most suitable man.

## CHAPTER IV

### GERMANY'S GREAT THRUSTS

**B**EFORE proceeding to a further analysis of the strategy of the operations on the Western Front, a brief reference to the numbers of the opposing armies will not be out of place.

On March 21, 1918, the fighting strength of the Germans probably outnumbered that of the Allies by about three hundred thousand men; but as the weeks and months went by and more and more American troops were made ready and brought into the firing line, this inequality between them was overcome; and by July 18, 1918, when Foch began his great counter-offensive, the fighting strength of the Allies on the Western Front probably exceeded that of the Germans as much as that of the Germans had exceeded that of the Allies on March 21.

But it should be constantly borne in mind that a preponderance of fighting forces on either

side was not necessary to the carrying out of Napoleon's principle of bringing superior forces against the enemy at the point of attack; for by surprise, or by swifter concentration, or by greater skill in maneuvering, an expert commander will not infrequently be able to accomplish this, regardless of whether his own or his adversary's forces are numerically superior within the theater of operations.

Right here, perhaps, is a good place for pointing out the fact that during more than four years of fierce and bloody fighting on the Western Front, the constant purpose of the commanding generals on both sides, whether they aimed a blow at some weak point of the enemy's line, struck fiercely at the bases of his salients, or attempted to break through his line on a wide front and resume a war of movement, was to bring outnumbering and greatly superior forces upon their chosen objectives, the immediate battlefields.

General Foch, in his book, *The Principles of War*, refers to this principle as, "the use of numerical superiority to obtain a definite result," and illustrates it by citing a conversation

that took place between Bonaparte and Moreau in 1799 at the home of Gohier, who gives the following account of it:

The two generals, who had never seen each other, seemed equally pleased to meet. It was noticed that each looked at the other silently for a moment. Bonaparte spoke first, told Moreau how he had long desired to know him: "You arrive victorious from Egypt," answered Moreau, "and I from Italy after a great defeat . . . ." After a few explanations of the causes of the defeat, he added: "It was impossible for our brave army not to be overcome by so much strength against it. It is always the greater number who defeat the smaller."

"You are right," said Napoleon, "it is always the greater number who defeat the smaller."

"But, General, with small armies you have often defeated big ones," I told Napoleon.

"Even then," he said, "it was always the smaller number who were defeated by the greater."

Which caused him to explain his method to us:

"When, with smaller forces, I was in the presence of a great army, I rapidly grouped my own and fell like lightning on one of the wings which I destroyed. I then took advantage of the disorder which such a maneuver always caused in the enemy's ranks to attack him at another point, always with all my forces. I defeated him thus piecemeal, and the resulting vic-

tory was always, as you see, a triumph of the greater number over the smaller."<sup>1</sup>

After a week's bitter fighting the onrush of the Germans in their great thrust towards Amiens, which began on March 21, 1918, was finally checked by the French reserves who were hurried to that front mainly from Champagne; and the first day after General Foch assumed supreme command of the Allied armies, he announced that Amiens was safe.<sup>2</sup>

Then, after a pause of eleven days, the Germans, on April 9, 1918, began their great thrust south of Ypres; and it was continued with hard fighting and varying success until their final effort on April 29, which, resulting in extremely heavy losses, caused them to abandon their attempts to break through the British line on that front. As at Amiens, so at Ypres, it was the arrival of the French reserves that turned the scale in favor of the British and enabled them to stop the Germans.

From April 29 to May 27, the Germans again

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<sup>1</sup> Foch, *The Principles of War*, pp. 97 and 98.

<sup>2</sup> Frank H. Simonds in *Review of Reviews*, June, 1918, p. 593.

paused in their efforts, in order to prepare for their third great thrust. The question was where would they strike. Would it be on the west side of the angular front somewhere between Montdidier and Ypres—or on the south side somewhere between Noyon and Verdun? There were several reasons why they would choose, and did choose, to strike on the south side:

First: The French reserves were being held along the west side, some as far north as Ypres, but mainly concentrated about Amiens, covering the point of junction of the British and French armies.

Second: The fact that the reserves were being held on the west side indicated that the French and British commanders expected the next attack on that side and were prepared for it.

Third: By making their break-through on the south side and extending it between Paris and Nancy and beyond, they would not only separate the French right wing occupying Verdun and the line of the Vosges from the French left wing in front and northeast of Paris, but would sever the communications of the French right



wing and be in an advantageous position to force its capture or destruction. Moreover, such a thrust as this would threaten the communications of the American forces between their camps south of the St. Mihiel salient and their ports of debarkation on the west and south coasts of France; and make it very difficult for them to fall back without abandoning a good part of the great collection of munitions and supplies which they had accumulated in that vicinity.

Thus we see that while a break-through on either front would have given the Germans the opportunity to carry out that principle of strategy of defeating separately the divided forces of the enemy, by holding one with a containing force while they massed superior numbers against the other and crushed or captured it, and then concentrated their whole strength on the remaining force, it was only on the south front that the Germans could also at the same time carry out that other great principle of strategy of striking at the communications of the enemy without exposing their own to his attack.

Accordingly, on May 27, 1918, the Germans began their third great thrust against the Allied line on a front of about thirty miles, from the point where it crossed the Aisne, some ten or twelve miles north of Reims, to the point where it crossed the Soissons-Laon Railway, about seven miles northeast of Soissons.

The attack on this front was a great surprise to the Allies; and for a while was remarkably successful. The French were literally swept from the Chemin-des-Dames, forced over the Aisne, and thence across the Vesle. Four French divisions were practically annihilated; and the British troops north of Reims, having their flank uncovered, were forced back towards that city. This practically left the way open to a further advance; and the Germans, taking immediate advantage of it, rushed forward almost unopposed. It was a serious time for General Foch; for he had only the wreck of the four French divisions and such local reserves as he could collect to stay the German advance.

The onrush continued for about a week. The Germans took Soissons, got possession of the Soissons - Château-Thierry Railway, pushed

south to Château-Thierry and the north bank of the Marne, and succeeded in cutting the Paris-Château-Thierry-Châlons-Verdun Railway, one of the important lines of communication of the French right wing with Paris.

But at Château-Thierry and along the Marne they were finally checked by the French and American reserves that were rushed to the threatened front from other sections of the Allied line. Here at the bridge which crosses the Marne opposite Château-Thierry, at Bouresches, in Belleau Wood, and at Vaux, the Third and Second American divisions, by their superb fighting, helped to bring the extreme German advance to a standstill and gained for themselves an imperishable fame. Already the First American Division had distinguished itself by capturing Cantigny, near Montdidier, on May 28, the day following the beginning of this great thrust.

On the whole, this thrust was a success for the Germans. They had pushed back the Allied line a distance of thirty miles at its farthest point. But it was not the complete success they had hoped for, since it was stopped before

they could break completely through the line and resume a war of movement. And what was of the utmost importance to the Allies was that the Germans did not succeed in pushing back the Allied line more than four or five miles westward of Soissons; or succeed in taking Reims or even the high ground about that city. As a consequence, they were left in possession of the long, narrow, dangerous Château-Thierry salient. But it was not alone this salient that gave them concern. The Amiens salient was also long, narrow, and dangerous. Both were extremely vulnerable. Both offered the Allies a splendid opportunity for striking the Germans a telling blow.

In this precarious and dangerous situation the Germans saw that they must attempt to widen the bases of these two narrow salients and render them less vulnerable and dangerous before making any further attempt to break through on the south side. This could best be done by an attack in force from the Noyon-Montdidier section on the west side of the Oise River towards Compiègne; for, should this objective be reached, it would force the French to

withdraw from the high ground and woods in the narrow salient, Compiègne-Noyon-Soissons, in the angle between the Oise and Aisne rivers, and practically obliterate the Amiens and Château-Thierry salients. Or, to speak more accurately, such an attack, if successful, would entirely obliterate the Amiens salient and change the narrow Château-Thierry salient into a much larger, broader, and less vulnerable one, whose general outline would run from Montdidier through Compiègne to Château-Thierry on one side, and from Château-Thierry to Reims on the other.

On June 9, 1918, just two weeks from the day the Germans began their thrust on Château-Thierry, they struck with great force on the Noyon-Montdidier front. But the Allies were not surprised as they had been on May 27. Expecting the attack, they had reserves near at hand to meet it. Nevertheless, by desperate fighting and through the sacrifice of many men, the Germans met with some success. They drove the French from the environs of Noyon some five or six miles down the valley on the west side of the Oise; and this advance, by

threatening the communications of the French on the east side of the river, made it necessary for them also to retire down the stream. But despite their most strenuous efforts the Germans failed to reach their objective. On June 13 they were still making slight advances here and there in the face of enormous losses; but by June 15 the fourth great German thrust had been practically brought to a halt, with the German advance lines still some six miles from Compiègne.

The total outcome of these seven days' fierce fighting was that the Germans had advanced their lines five or six miles between the two salients and had gained some valuable ground, but had fallen far short of reaching their objective; nevertheless, the advance in this portion of their front was of great importance to them, since it considerably widened the bases and diminished the vulnerability of the Amiens and Château-Thierry salients.

Then there followed a pause of a month, in which the Germans prepared for their fifth great thrust, and the Allies were content to remain on the defensive, since every day's delay

was adding, on an average, from seven to eight thousand men to the strength of the American Army in France.

There was no change in the general strategical situation. To break through the south front, push through between Paris and Nancy and sever the communications of the French right wing occupying the line of the Vosges, was still strategically the best plan, as it had been from the first. And since the German advance on Château-Thierry had created a French salient—although a broad one—with Reims as its apex, this was an additional reason for striking on this front; for it was evident to all that should the Germans break through between Reims and the Argonne Forest on one side of this salient, and between Reims and Château-Thierry on the other side, they would cut or threaten the communications of the troops occupying it and force their capture or retirement. Moreover, such an attack would at the same time greatly widen the Château-Thierry salient and make it much less vulnerable to an Allied attack.

Then again, with the French holding Reims,

Foch could launch a counter-attack from that city northward and westward and cut the roads and railways so vital to the existence of the German troops occupying the Château-Thierry salient. A thrust northward to the Aisne would cut the Soissons-Neufchâtel-Rethel-Mézières Railway; a thrust westward to Fismes would cut the Château-Thierry-Fismes Railway.

These reasons, evidently, were patent to the Allies; for they were expecting the Germans to make the thrust along these very lines; and, consequently, when the attack came, it did not take them by surprise as did the great thrust of May 27 on Château-Thierry. Of equal importance was the month's delay which gave Foch time to prepare to meet the attack.

On July 15, 1918, the Germans launched their fifth and last great thrust against the Allied line on a front of about seventy-five miles, extending from the western edge of the Argonne Forest on their left, past Reims, to Château-Thierry on their right; and as the action developed the front was extended northward from Château-Thierry some twenty-five miles to Soissons.



From the start the Germans made but little headway between the Argonne Forest and Reims. General Gouraud who commanded this portion of the French line had ascertained only a few days previously just when the Germans would begin their attack, and he made his dispositions so skillfully to meet it that a good part of the German Army in his front was practically annihilated. In repulsing the attack he was ably assisted by the Forty-second American Division which fought with great valor near Perthes.

Still, near the Reims salient on its east side, the Germans by a concentrated attack made a little advance. Here they captured Moronvilliers Heights; and, in the earlier rushes, even succeeded in reaching Prunay and in cutting the Reims-Châlons Railway at this point; but the French, realizing the importance of holding this line of railway, strongly counter-attacked and retook the town. However, the Germans in this vicinity held most of their gains, their line having been advanced some three or four miles southwestward in the direction of Epernay; and this was of the utmost importance to them,

since it was a thrust into the very base of the Reims salient.

Between Château-Thierry and Reims the Germans made a better beginning. On the whole Marne front, they forced the crossing of the river, driving back the French, and a considerable American contingent of the Third Division which was on outpost duty a few miles east of Château-Thierry. But the Americans by a brilliant series of counter-attacks at Mézy and at the mouth of the Surmelin drove back the enemy and finally succeeded in re-establishing their line in their immediate front.<sup>1</sup>

But the Germans, despite these reverses and in the face of spirited French attacks, held their position on the south side of the Marne for five or six miles on either side of Dormans and began slowly to push forward up the valley of the Marne on a front of about twelve miles; and, by the evening of July 17, their advance was within eight miles of Epernay and extended

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<sup>1</sup> "It was on this occasion," says General Pershing in his report to the Secretary of War, "that a single regiment of the Third wrote one of the most brilliant pages in our military annals." The regiment referred to was the Thirty-eighth U. S. Infantry, commanded by Colonel U. G. McAlexander, U. S. Army.

northward to the western edge of the Mountain of Reims, just north of Epernay.

The situation had reached a critical period. Although the Germans had been successfully checked throughout a good portion of their long battle front, they had, by massing superior forces and making stupendous efforts on each side of the base of the Reims salient, met with considerable success. And it is evident that if they could have pushed forward a few miles farther up the Marne Valley, captured Epernay, and seized the Mountain of Reims, they would have gained possession of a considerable part of the Epernay-Reims Railway, which would have forced the Allies to withdraw immediately from the Reims salient over the Reims-Châlons Railway; and this would have been attended with great difficulties, since the German line was very close to the railway in the vicinity of Prunay.

Then, a further advance of the Germans southward from the Argonne Forest-Reims front, and southeastward from the Epernay-Reims front up the Marne Valley to and beyond Châlons, would have severed or threatened the

communications of the Allied troops occupying the Argonne Forest and the great Verdun salient and forced them either to surrender or retire. These operations, it is readily seen, would have wiped out the vulnerable German salients of Château-Thierry and St. Mihiel and left the Germans in a most favorable position for taking in reverse the Allied troops occupying the line of the Vosges. Thus, Germany's original intention of turning the Vosges and the French fortresses along that front would have been accomplished; not by the south, but by the north; not by passing through the Belfort gap, but by ironing out the Reims and Verdun salients.

Here, then, was the turning point of this great battle; for one more successful push up the valley of the Marne to Epernay would have changed the whole conduct of the campaign and most probably have produced astounding results.

Strategically and psychologically the time had arrived for Foch to strike.

First: Because there was every indication, every probability, that there would be left no

vulnerable German salients to attack, should he delay a few days longer.

Second: Because the Germans in their fifth great thrust, although partially successful, had met with great discouragement and terrible losses. It was evident that they could no longer expect, even with a month's preparation, to break through the Allied line on an extended front and advance some thirty or thirty-five miles into the enemy's territory as they had done on March 21 and on May 27. And to win the war required them to do even more than this; for unless they could eventually break through the Allied line and resume a war of movement, there was no hope of final success.

Third: Because the French had been greatly encouraged by the fact that along the entire fighting line they had been able, with the assistance of the Americans, to hold the Germans in their original positions, or to check them in the few places where they had bent in the Allied line. After months of falling back, after years of defensive fighting, to be able to check the onrush of the Germans in one of their great thrusts, and to take the offensive here and there

and force them back, force *them* to retire, brought encouragement to every French heart and raised the spirits of the entire French Army.

Fourth: Because the American troops, wherever employed in the fighting, had demonstrated their fitness and bravery. At Cantigny, at Château-Thierry, at Bouresches, in Belleau Wood, at Vaux, at Perthes, at Mézy, and the mouth of the Surmelin, they had fought with extraordinary dash, determination, and courage. They were no longer untried troops. Foch knew from the way they had fought that they could be depended upon, that he could put them into the front line beside the veteran and indomitable French troops, and that they would not fail him. Young, enthusiastic, energetic, brave, and with their very souls yearning for the fray, there was no task too difficult for them, no veteran German troops whom they feared to face.

Just how General Foch, at this very crisis of the war, took advantage of the situation to strike the blow which stopped completely the onrush of the Germans and soon turned the tide of battle against them along their whole far-

flung battle line will be described in the next chapter.

But before closing the discussion it will be instructive and interesting to inquire, what would most probably have been the outcome, had the Germans, as herein supposititiously described, been able to push south between Paris and Nancy and take the French and Americans in reverse along the line of the Vosges? There are two contingencies that might have arisen.

First: The Germans might have pushed far enough south to sever not only the communications of the French with Paris, but also the communications of the Americans with their ports of debarkation at St. Nazaire, La Rochelle, and Bordeaux on the west coast of France and at Marseille on the south coast; in which case neither the French right wing nor the American Army could have escaped capture; for with their supplies cut off, and a German army closing in on their rear, while another was pressing them closely on their original front, there would have been no alternative but to surrender.

Had these events taken place, substantially as here outlined — and it requires no stretch of the

imagination to see that they easily could have happened—they might have led to the speedy ending of the war in Germany's favor; for with the greater part of the American Army and a considerable part of the French Army out of the fighting, the German armies in Eastern France, with new communications established directly across the Vosges into South Germany, could have safely pushed forward and enveloped Paris and the French Army defending it, and thence, moving northward, could have struck a decisive blow against the British Army.

Second: The French and Americans along the Vosges from Verdun to Belfort might have seen sufficiently early the danger of losing their communications and have attempted a retirement to avoid the disaster which would have inevitably resulted from their loss. But with the Germans pushing south from Epernay and Châlons upon Troyes and Chaumont, this retirement along the roads and railways to Paris and the American ports of debarkation on the west coast of France would have been directly across the front of the German advance, which would have exposed them to a flank attack and

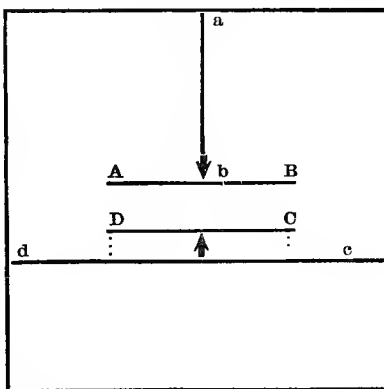


compelled them to form front to a flank,<sup>1</sup> one of the most dangerous positions for an army when it fights a battle. "Nothing," says Napoleon, "is so rash or contrary to principle as to make a flank march before an army in position."<sup>2</sup>

But let us take the most favorable view of the case for the Allies, and suppose that the retirement of their right wing could have been made past the front of the German Army without any great loss or disaster, what would have been the

<sup>1</sup> An army forms front to a flank when it operates on a front parallel to the line communicating with its base.

To illustrate the danger of fighting a battle in this position: Suppose an army, AB is marching south perpendicular to its communications a.b, and the opposing army, which is marching west along its communications c.d, is forced to form front to a flank, CD, and engage AB in battle. Now it is evident that a single defeat of CD by AB would drive CD from its communications and disaster would follow; whereas, if AB is defeated by CD, AB can fall back and fight again and again, without any chance of losing its communications.



<sup>2</sup> Napoleon's *Maxims of War*, p. 66.

outcome? Evidently the French and Americans of the Allied right wing could then have formed battle line, extending, say, approximately southward from Château-Thierry to the Seine and thence along the upper stretches of that river toward Dijon, which would have covered directly their communications with Paris and the ports of American debarkation on the western coast of France, and which would have put a stop to any German envelopment of the Allied right wing and enabled the French and Americans to make a prolonged resistance; for, unless some unforeseen or unusual disaster had overtaken them, they could hardly have been conquered without first being driven entirely across North Central France to the ports of American debarkation.

But before leaving this phase of the discussion, there is another point worthy of attention. It will be remembered that one of the ports of debarkation for American troops was Marseille, and that the line of railway running thence to the American headquarters at Chaumont was an almost due north and south line; so that, had the German advance been such as to

prevent the French and Americans from falling back towards Paris and the western coast of France, they might have retired towards Marseille.

The establishment of Marseille for a point of debarkation and an American base of operations may be looked upon, strategically, as a measure of safety taken against the worst that might have happened; since it is evident that, had Paris been taken and a large part of the French and English armies been cut off and captured, the American Army, reinforced by a good part of the right wing of the French Army, might have been able to fall back slowly along the railways towards its base of operations at Marseille and, by fighting defensive and delaying battles, have become a rallying point for all Allied troops that were able to escape capture or to free themselves from the clutch of the German armies in Northern France. And, perhaps, by this means, the Allies might have been able eventually to turn the tide of battle; for the uncertainty of war is proverbial, and so long as an army can maintain its communications and obtain food, ammunition, and equip-

ments there is always a possibility of eventual victory.

It is not the purpose here to carry this discussion further, however interesting it might be to point out some of the strategical problems that would have arisen had it been necessary for the Allies to take this course, but simply to say that the selection of Marseille for a point of debarkation and an American base of operations was a wise choice; because no one could foresee what turn the campaign might take; and because it is always wise to consider all contingencies and provide for the worst. "In forming the plan of a campaign," says Napoleon, "it is requisite to foresee everything the enemy may do, and to be prepared with the necessary means to counteract it."<sup>1</sup> Again he says: "Reserve to yourself every possible chance of success."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Napoleon's Maxims of War*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Napoleon's Maxims of War*, p. 68.

## CHAPTER V

### FOCH'S GREAT COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

**D**URING the 15th, 16th, and 17th of July, 1918, the tremendous battle of the fifth great German thrust had raged over a seventy-five-mile front extending from the Argonne Forest to Château-Thierry. It was the supreme and last effort of the Germans for a military decision on the Western Front. For a month they had prepared and planned and were now striking with all their power. Although they had been held by the desperate fighting of the French and Americans throughout the greater part of their long battle line, they had with overwhelming forces and stupendous efforts succeeded in driving a wedge into the base of the Reims salient up the valley of the Marne towards Epernay. Another day's advance, one more blow upon the wedge, would obliterate the Reims salient, decrease greatly the vulnerability of the Château-Thierry salient, and lead,

very probably, in the end to a German victory. The time had come to strike. Where to strike was the question.

Ever since the formation of the Château-Thierry salient, it had been evident that its sides near its base were most vulnerable to an Allied attack; not only because of the narrowness of the salient, but because of the direction and extent of the lines of communication of the troops occupying it. Examining it, we notice the following distinguishing features: The Soissons-Fismes-Reims Railway cuts directly across its base; and for the greater part of the distance it parallels the Vesle River. On the western side, and parallel to it, one of the main highways of the salient joins Soissons with Château-Thierry, and is itself paralleled throughout by a narrow-gauge railway; both of which lie only four or five miles from the line which separated the fronts of the opposing armies. The Reims-Fismes-Paris Railway crosses the highway at about its middle point and is practically at right angles to it.

Over the highway and railway connecting Soissons with Château-Thierry, the Germans

along the Marne and in the nose of the salient, obtained practically all their munitions and other supplies; very few, if any, came by way of Fismes, for the reason that there was no line of railway connecting that town with the main German supply lines to the northward.

In this situation, in which the Germans, while holding the west face of the salient, had, of necessity to maintain continually a front to a flank position, it is evident that an advance of only a few miles by the Allies on this side would sever the communications of the Germans in the nose of the salient and compel them to retire. It is also evident that an advance made at the same time by the French and Americans on the other side of the salient towards Fismes would hasten the retirement of the enemy and might result in their capture, since it would threaten the Fismes-Paris Railway and, if pushed far enough, deprive the Germans of its use in withdrawing their troops and supplies from the salient back behind the line of the Vesle. Another feature which favored the Allies was that there were woods along the west side of the salient where the Allied divisions could be assem-

bled out of sight of the enemy until the moment for opening the attack arrived.

General Foch had foreseen all this; and in preparation for an attack on the west side of the salient had assembled, under the command of General Mangin of the French Army, eight or nine French and American combat divisions in and near the Villers-Cotterêts Forest, among which were the First and Second American divisions and the famous Moroccan Division of the French Army. Early on the morning of July 18, 1918, he ordered Mangin forward against the Germans on a front of about twenty-five miles, from the outskirts of Château-Thierry to the Aisne, some six miles northwest of Soissons. In the advance, the Moroccan Division occupied an intermediate position between the two American divisions.

The Allied attack was a surprise to the Germans, and for the first two days was highly successful. On the first day the French and Americans forced back, or drove through, the German line, capturing many thousand prisoners and many guns and villages. By the afternoon of July 19 the French artillery from the



hills overlooking Soissons were sweeping that city and the railway and highway leading thence to Château-Thierry; and the French cavalry and tanks had crossed these lines of communication, making it absolutely necessary for the Germans to withdraw immediately from the salient. Coincident with these great successes, the French and Americans on the other side of the salient had completely checked the movement of the Germans on Epernay.

Immediately the result of Foch's counter-thrust became apparent. On the evening of July 17, the Allies were on the point of losing the Reims salient, a loss almost certain to bring disastrous consequences. On the evening of July 19 all had changed, the Germans were about to lose the Château-Thierry salient; and with it all hope of final victory.

Realizing fully their perilous position, the Germans saw that they must at all hazards hold open the gap between Soissons and Reims through which their guns, supplies, and troops had to be withdrawn, if they were to escape capture. For this purpose they massed their troops in great strength near Soissons on one

side and near Reims on the other; and for the next week or ten days fought desperately to keep the gap open; while the French and Americans fought with equal determination to close it.

The Germans were successful in keeping open the gap; and, aided by the skillful and fierce fighting of their rear guards, were able to withdraw from the salient to the Vesle and, ultimately, to the Aisne with an inconsiderable loss of men and guns. But on July 18 and 19 they had already lost some 700 guns and 35,000 men. However, these great losses were of little moment compared to the immense consequences of their defeat.

On March 21, 1918, they had launched a great thrust to obtain a military decision on the Western Front, and had followed it by four other great thrusts, in each of which they had made considerable progress towards accomplishing their purpose. But in the fifth and last thrust they were checked, turned back, and forced to retire some thirty miles.

It was the turning point of that tremendous battle. It was more than that; it was the su-

preme crisis of the great World War. And it was all brought about by a counter-offensive upon the most vulnerable front of the German line. Such a counter-offensive upon any other front of the long line would have produced no remarkable results; but here, where the thrust in the very first stages of the onset cut the main highway and railway leading into the Château-Thierry salient, it was at once productive of mighty consequences. Immediately the Germans had to abandon their great offensive and to fight with desperation to save from capture or annihilation the troops occupying the salient. Immediately the whole character of the war was changed. In the twinkling of an eye, so to speak, the initiative was lost by the Germans and gained by the Allies. Fighting now on the defensive, the Germans could no longer dominate the situation. No longer could they choose their point of attack and mass overwhelming forces against a sector of the Allied line. Already they were outnumbered; and, owing to the rapidity with which the Americans were crossing the Atlantic and being brought into active operations, were certain of being

confronted in the near future with still greater outnumbering forces.

Here we have a splendid illustration of the application of that principle of strategy of striking at the communications of the enemy without exposing your own to his attack; and of that other principle closely related to it, that where two armies are in such a position that an attack from either cuts the communications of the other, that army whose communications are cut, or even seriously threatened, will invariably turn back to fight for its communications rather than press forward along its original front.

Hardly had the Germans been driven across the Vesle and the Château-Thierry salient been wiped out when General (now Marshal) Foch<sup>1</sup> turned his attention to the Amiens salient. On August 8 the Fourth British Army under General Rawlinson launched a terrific attack south of Albert and towards Chaulnes, along the flank of the Amiens salient and across the German lines of communication, while the French First

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<sup>1</sup> General Foch, commander-in-chief of the Allied forces, was made a marshal of France on August 6, 1918.

Army under General Debeney made a similar assault along the Montdidier front towards Lassigny and Roye. In these assaults, in which many small, swift tanks were used by the British to smash through the enemy's line, the Germans were surprised; their loss in prisoners was nearly 30,000; in guns more than 700; and their front was forced back some twelve miles to the Albert-Chaulnes-Roye-Lassigny line.

Thus we see that by attacking the Germans on each flank of the salient the Allies here forced them back in much the same way as they had done in the Château-Thierry salient; but as this was a much broader salient and the attacks were made much nearer its nose, only a part of it was wiped out. It was necessary to strike again.

Accordingly, Marshal Foch brought Mangin's army, which had been operating about Soissons, into the angle of the Aisne and Oise, northeast of Compiègne, and threw it against the German line towards Noyon; and at about the same time on the other flank he threw Byng's Third British army towards Bapaume on a front between Arras and Albert. Both attacks were decisive;

each army took from twenty to thirty thousand prisoners and penetrated deeply the flanks of the German position. This penetration, which compelled the Germans to fall back again towards the Hindenburg Line, virtually wiped out the Amiens salient.

Meanwhile during these operations the Germans were gradually and methodically withdrawing from the narrow Lys salient just south of Ypres. Knowing its extreme vulnerability, they did not purpose giving Marshal Foch the opportunity to attack it in force.

Foch's next offensive was to strike eastward from Arras with Horne's British army towards Cambrai and Douai. This thrust was very ably executed by General Horne, who forced the Germans back, took about 20,000 prisoners and a considerable quantity of guns and material, and even succeeded in breaking through in places some of the permanent German defenses in the vicinity of the Hindenburg Line and in reaching country that had been held by the Germans since 1914.

But the principal strategical value which this thrust had on the situation was that, taken in

connection with Mangin's thrust towards Noyon in the preceding operations, it created a sort of salient of the intervening territory occupied by the Germans west of the Hindenburg Line and made it much more vulnerable to future attack; and as Mangin's thrust had also exposed the flank of the Germans occupying the territory between the Vesle and the Aisne, General Ludendorff, who at this time was directing the operations of the German armies, saw the futility of trying further to hold the German line in these positions, and decided to fall back to the Hindenburg Line from the Cambrai front to Reims. By September 8, one month after Rawlinson had struck eastward from Amiens, all this was decided and in the course of being carried out. In that one month the German prisoners taken numbered 115,000; and since the beginning of Foch's counter-offensive on July 18, the captures exceeded 150,000 and included 2,500 guns and vast quantities of munitions and supplies.<sup>1</sup>

Having practically obliterated the Château-

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<sup>1</sup> Frank H. Simonds, in *Review of Reviews*, October, 1918, p. 375.

Thierry, Amiens, and Lys salients, Foch now turned his attention to the St. Mihiel salient, the only German salient still remaining. Even here, Ludendorff already had begun to make preparations for an early withdrawal.

The operations against this salient were under the direct command of General Pershing, who, having made the necessary preliminary and secret preparations, launched his attacks early on the morning of September 12. They were highly successful. The Americans from the south side of the salient and the French and Americans from the west side each forced their way through the German lines, and in two days had closed the gap and were in possession of the salient. During these operations the Americans, at the cost of only 7,000 casualties, mostly light, took 16,000 prisoners and 443 guns, besides a great quantity of munitions and supplies.

In all these counter-offensives the plan invariably followed by Marshal Foch was to make in each case a double thrust against the salient, one on each side of it; and in such a direction as to cut or threaten the communications of the



troops occupying it. It was this that produced the great results, for an army's communications are vital to its being. Destroy them and the battle is lost; even threaten them and disaster will frequently follow. Hence it is that the communications of an army are of such vital concern to a commander-in-chief. Not only his adversary's but his own; for if he would strike at his adversary's communications he should first make sure of the safety of his own. If an able soldier, he will give the most careful consideration to their protection, direction, and extent. "While distant spectators," says Hamley, "imagine a general to be intent only on striking or parrying a blow, he probably directs a hundred glances, a hundred anxious thoughts, to the communications in his rear, for one that he bestows on his adversary's front."<sup>1</sup>

But this, General Ludendorff failed to do. He was intent on striking his blows, but seemed to have little concern as to the vulnerability of his communications. After his great thrust of March 21, 1918, which created the Amiens salient, he continued to make other great thrusts

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<sup>1</sup> *The Operations of War*, p. 40.

creating other salients, each thrust greatly lengthening the German line and making it more and more vulnerable, until, finally, when the time came for Foch to strike, there were four great German salients in all of which the communications of the troops occupying them were vulnerable to Allied attacks. Seeing all this, Foch began his great offensive of July 18, and continued to follow it up with swift and powerful blows until all the salients were wiped out.

But these victories cannot be explained solely on the ground of the vulnerability of the salients. There were other causes, the most important of which were: The change in the *morale* of the opposing armies; the surprise with which Foch carried out his attacks; and the use of small tanks by the Allies in their offensives.

Writing to his brother Joseph in 1808, Napoleon said: "The moral forces are three-fourths of war; the material forces but one-fourth." (*"A la guerre les trois quarts sont des affaires morales; la balance des forces réelles n'est que pour un autre quart."*)<sup>1</sup>

The uninterrupted successes of the Prussian

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<sup>1</sup> Napier, *Peninsula War*, vol. 1, p. 452.

Army on the battlefields of Europe during the war with Denmark in 1864, with Austria in 1866, and with France in 1870-71, had given it a moral influence greatly exceeding its actual size. And, in this great war, the Germans had been everywhere victorious, except on the Western Front; and even here had met with much success and a number of times been close to final victory. For more than fifty years they never had met with a defeat, nor ever experienced on any battlefield more than a temporary setback. There is nothing that encourages the *morale* of an army like victory. With this record of victories inscribed on its banners, the German Army had come to feel that it could not be beaten. It had, it is true, been checked at the Marne, at Verdun, and at the Somme; but it regarded these as no more than temporary setbacks; and now in July, 1918, after four years of persistent fighting, with spirits still high and flushed with the success of its four great thrusts, it was making a supreme effort for final victory on the Western Front.

On the other hand, the French and British had no victories to encourage them. For four

years they had fought bravely, brilliantly, determinedly on the defensive; and although they had succeeded a few times in taking the offensive for brief periods, their whole campaign was one of defense, in which the French and British armies had made, and were still making, every effort in their power to stay the progress of the Germans. During all this time they never lost their grip, never became completely discouraged. Their fighting spirit—their *morale*—was always good. But it was not the *morale* of victorious armies pressing on from one success to another; it was the *morale* of armies driven to bay, fighting for their lives; the *morale* of the defensive; the *morale* that persisted in the face of discouragement, that welled up from the hearts of desperate and determined men, inspired by love of country and the righteousness of their cause.

Such was the situation when the Americans came actively into the fighting. For more than a year they had been getting ready to help. It was a slow process; because, at the outbreak of the war with Germany, the United States, so far as her land forces were concerned, was totally

unprepared. Laws had to be passed; civilians had to be made into soldiers; companies, regiments, brigades, and divisions had to be organized, mobilized, and trained, and then sent three thousand miles by water to the theater of war. But soon troops began to arrive in France; and as fast as they came they were given thorough training, especial attention being given to target practice and the tactics of open warfare, in addition to careful instruction in trench fighting. But their arrival was necessarily slow at first and their training took much time; so that many months elapsed before Generals Foch and Pershing felt that the American divisions were sufficiently well trained and disciplined to take their places side by side with the veteran French and British troops. At the start, the trained divisions were given sectors of the French front to defend in the Lorraine district; later, other divisions, for practically like purposes, and to help stem the tide of any German advance, were placed temporarily under the orders of British and French generals and made a part of their immediate commands.

But the time came when they were to take a

still greater and more independent part in assisting to put a stop to the great German thrusts. On May 28, the day following the beginning of the third great German thrust, the First American Division launched an attack against the Germans at Cantigny in Picardy and with splendid dash took the town. It was the first independent, offensive action participated in by the Americans. Strategically it was of little importance, but from a psychological point of view it was of the utmost importance; for it brought great encouragement to the French and British people and their hard-pressed armies. A week later, another and more dramatic event brought still more cheer to the French and British, when the Second and Third American divisions put a stop to the German advance at Château-Thierry.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There has recently been some controversy between officers of the Third American Division and the Marines as to whether the Marines, who were a part of the Second American Division, actually fought at Château-Thierry. The truth seems to be that the Marines were not actually in the town itself, but fought at Bouresches, in Belleau Wood, and at other places near Château-Thierry; and that these actions and those fought immediately in and about the town by the Third American Division are generally spoken of and known as the battle of Château-Thierry. Certain it is that both these American divisions fought in the Château-Thierry sector to stop the Germans.

The moral effect of these two actions, coming as they did at this critical period, when the Germans seemed just on the point of breaking through the Allied line, was immense. Their effect on the rank and file of the French and British armies can hardly be overestimated. The Americans had arrived. They had shown themselves to be heroic fighters. With splendid dash, bravery, and persistence they had taken Cantigny and had even met and hurled back at Château-Thierry the Prussian Guards, the very flower of the German Army. They had the push, the punch. They could not be denied. And awaiting their turn were other divisions ready and keen for the conflict; and behind them American soldiers pouring into France at the rate of a quarter million a month.

All this was the greatest encouragement the Allies had received during the war. It was a guaranty to them that the tide of battle would soon turn. It was the herald of victory; and as their spirits rose, their *morale* was enormously increased. But of no less importance to them was the correspondingly depressing effect which all this must have had on the Ger-

mans in shattering their hopes and in weakening their fighting spirit. With rapidly diminishing numbers, they had to look forward to meeting the rapidly increasing numbers of the Allies. In such a situation only the fortune of war<sup>1</sup> or a great military genius could save them.

The real crisis of the war was to come later, on July 18, when Foch began his great offensive; but the beginning of the great change in the *morale* of the opposing armies, the psychological turn in the tide of the war, was on May 28, 1918, at Cantigny, when the First American Division captured that town—a date and a name ever to be memorable in the history of the war.

As the campaign progressed, the *morale* of the Allied armies continued of course to increase with their victories. Much of this increase was

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<sup>1</sup> "Yet who can foretell what the 'Fortune of War,' on any given occasion, may ordain? When everything has been arranged that genius can inspire, and that skill and forethought can suggest, how much must always depend upon 'chance,' an indeterminate factor that enters largely into all the problems of war, and which no general can afford to ignore. . . . In every campaign there have been incidents which no foresight could have foretold. They come into the category of the Fortune of War, and the most consummate generalship can neither avert them, nor always neutralize their effects."—Colonel R. C. Hart, in *Reflections on the Art of War*, pp. 41 and 44.



brought about by the skill displayed in the arrangement of the different nationalities on the battle line, and much was due to the friendly rivalry between the French, British, and American armies, and the several American divisions.

An example or two in illustration will suffice: When General Mangin arranged his battle line for Foch's great counter-offensive of July 18, he placed the famous French Moroccan Division between the First and Second American divisions. Picture to yourself the situation! Here were two American divisions, both of which had already in their very first action won for themselves an imperishable fame, side by side with the illustrious Moroccan Division, which in brilliant action again and again had written its name in blood and gained for itself an immortal renown. What must have been the feelings of both? The French of course felt that under no circumstances would they allow themselves to be surpassed in courage and dash by the Americans; and the Americans felt to a man that they would show this veteran and brave French division that they, too, even though young and

new to the game, could fight as valiantly and, if need be, die as bravely as the bravest.

The British, too, after Foch's great successful counter-offensive of July 18, could not but feel that they must not be surpassed by the French and Americans; and with renewed courage they again demonstrated what British soldiers could do. And when the Second American Division in Belleau Wood and the Third at Château-Thierry covered themselves with glory, the officers and men of every other American division were determined that, if the opportunity came to them, they, too, would prove to the world that they were no less valiant. So the Forty-second tried to equal the Third; and the First tried to equal the Second; and the Twenty-seventh and Thirtieth vied with each other and tried to equal or surpass the First; and so it went through the American Expeditionary Forces, increasing enormously the *esprit de corps* and *morale* of every combat American division.

The surprise attacks planned and carried out by the commander-in-chief of the Allies had also much to do with winning the victories. We

have seen how he took advantage of the woods of Villers-Cotterêts to conceal and concentrate his troops for the counter-offensive of July 18, and from this cover suddenly burst upon the Germans in a surprise attack. But it was perhaps not so much the surprise due to the concealment of his forces prior to attack that deserves mention, as it was the surprise caused by the rapidity of the blows which he struck and the unexpected places where they fell.

Hardly had the Germans been driven from the Château-Thierry salient when Rawlinson attacked from the British front towards Chaulnes, and Debeney from the Montdidier front towards Lassigny and Roye. These attacks were soon followed by Mangin's attack toward Noyon and Byng's towards Bapaume. Then came Horne's great attack from Arras towards Cambrai and Douai, followed shortly afterwards by Pershing's double attack against the St. Mihiel salient.

Thus, so rapid and unexpected were Foch's blows that the Germans knew not which way to turn. They were being hammered all along the line; and if they weakened one portion of

their line to strengthen another, the weakened portion might at any moment be attacked in force.

In nearly all the great battles and campaigns of history, surprise has played an important and, often, a determining part. But on the Western Front, with the enemy's aeroplanes always hovering over the battle line, it was extremely difficult for either side to make any great concentration of troops at any particular point of the line and surprise the other side; nevertheless, by taking advantage of the lie of the land and its topographical features, and by moving troops at night and concealing them as much as possible in the daytime, it occasionally happened that each side was enabled to surprise the other. Thus the Allies were surprised by the great German thrusts of March 21 and May 27 and the Germans were surprised by Foch's counter-offensive of July 18 and by the subsequent attacks of the British, French, and Americans. But on both sides there were other surprises, such as the gas attack and tank attack surprises, which had an important bearing on the outcome.

The campaign on the Western Front had not progressed many months before each side had come to feel that there was little or no hope of breaking through the intrenched lines of the other, unless there should be found some much more powerful instruments of destruction than those already in use. It was with this idea in mind that the Germans worked out their gas attacks; and, later, the Allies their tank attacks.

Poisonous gas was first used by the Germans on April 22, 1915, in an attack against the British and French near Ypres. As first used, it was in the form of chlorine clouds driven by the wind across the enemy's trenches. But soon afterwards the Germans began the development and manufacture of gas shells, in which poisonous gases of various kinds were to be used. By this means they purposed to break through the enemy's lines. Heretofore, their plan had been to destroy first, with high explosive shells, the intrenchments and wire entanglements of the enemy, then to press forward and drive back the defenders; but this method having failed, they hoped by the use of poisonous gases to destroy first the defenders, then to advance

with their infantry, destroy quickly the enemy's intrenchments and barbed-wire entanglements, and push rapidly forward to the open country beyond. With this end in view, they kept on perfecting their gas shells and improving their methods of making gas attacks.

It was with rolling barrage fire, alternating poisonous gas shells at intervals with shrapnel, that they launched their great thrusts against the Allies during the spring and summer of 1918. This method of attack was used with great success. The defenders of the advanced positions were in nearly every case practically annihilated. The almost universal success with which the Germans, in their great thrusts, broke through the Allies' intrenched lines, was largely due to these gas attacks. But no sooner was it seen by the Allies that the Germans had begun to develop this method of attack than they, too, as a means of self-protection, turned their attention to the manufacture of poisonous gases, gas shells, and gas masks. As they did not at first have the same facilities for manufacturing them as the Germans, it was a long time before they could meet

the Germans on even terms in the use of this frightful method of warfare. However, they finally succeeded; and by July 18, 1918, when Foch began his great counter-offensive, they were surprising the Germans with gas attacks about as frequently as the Germans were surprising them; and, later, towards the end of the fighting on the Western Front, they had begun to outdo the Germans in the use of this destructive element.

During the three and a half years prior to the great German thrust of March 21, 1918, the almost invariable practice of either combatant, in making an attack against the other, was to precede it by a great artillery bombardment of high explosive shells, in order to destroy the intrenchments and barbed-wire entanglements, preparatory to the advance of the infantry. But in such an attack there was little opportunity for surprise; because the defenders, always forewarned by the artillery bombardment, knew that the main attack would follow, and were able to concentrate a sufficient force to meet it. In the tank, the Allies found a partial solution of the problem.

General Byng of the British Army had conceived the idea of omitting altogether the usual artillery bombardment which heretofore had invariably preceded the attack and of substituting in its place a great number of tanks, which, having been assembled secretly behind the line, were to be launched upon the enemy and open a way through the barbed-wire entanglements and intrenchments, and drive out the machine-gun nests. By this plan he hoped to surprise the Germans, since there would be nothing to indicate to them that an attack was about to be made.

At Cambrai in November, 1917, General Byng carried out this method of attack with complete success. He broke through the Hindenburg Line on a front of some ten or twelve miles; and although shortly afterwards the Germans counter-attacked and recovered their lines, the lesson was not lost on the Allies. They saw at once that here was a powerful weapon of offense that could be used in surprise attacks to smash through the enemy's line and destroy his machine-gun fire.

Accordingly, the Allies at once began secret-



ly the construction of a large number of tanks of both large and small size. This took time; and although a good many had been constructed, and might have been used to assist in stopping the great German thrusts, General Foch preferred to wait until more were constructed before launching them against the German lines. He desired to keep the matter of their construction secret until a sufficient number could be used effectively in his own offensives. In this way he hoped to surprise the Germans, who had constructed only a few tanks, which were known to be very unwieldy and greatly inferior to those of the Allies. This plan was carried out. The tanks were used by General Mangin in the great offensive of July 18, and, subsequently, by the other Allied Army commanders in their offensives. They were a great surprise to the Germans; and, from the start, were remarkably successful; especially the smaller ones, which, being impervious to machine-gun fire and having a speed of twelve miles an hour, were able, after crossing the line of the enemy's intrenchments, and destroying his machine-gun nests, to drive ahead of the

infantry along with the cavalry and do most effective work in capturing field guns and in rounding up the retreating and disorganized enemy.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FIGHT FOR THE HINDENBURG LINE

**A**FTER the St. Mihiel salient had been wiped out and there were no more German salients to attack, it was evident that the Allies would encounter much greater difficulties in forcing the Germans still farther back, particularly since Ludendorff had decided to make a determined stand along the old Hindenburg Line, which, during three years of war, had been developed into an intricate and powerful system of defenses, heretofore practically impregnable to Allied attacks. Indeed, save at the second battle of Cambrai, it had not been seriously breached throughout its entire length.

It was the middle of September, 1918, and there were only about six or eight weeks more of actual campaigning before the weather would put a stop to the fighting. It was the purpose of Ludendorff to hold the Allies substantially along the strongly intrenched positions of the

Hindenburg Line until the coming of winter would permit him to rest, recuperate, and reconstruct his already shattered armies. If he could stop the onward rush of the Allied armies along this line and the armies of the Central Powers in other theaters of operations held their own, he could get his own armies again into shape for a renewal of the campaign in the spring of 1919, which he purposed doing, should the German peace offensive, which was already under way, not produce satisfactory results during the winter months.

On the other hand, Foch's purpose and hope was not to let these strongly fortified defenses stop the progress of his armies, but to break through them and continue his victories. How to meet the difficult situation? where to strike? what plans, what strategy to adopt and carry out? were important and vital questions to be decided.

That portion of the line along which the contending powers struggled for the mastery in this great fight ran westward from a point about eight miles north of Verdun to a point about two miles north of Reims, thence north-

westward through St. Quentin, Cambrai, and Lens to Nieuport on the English Channel. Southward from Verdun to Switzerland the French and Americans on one side and the Germans on the other stood inactively facing each other in their intrenchments during the great fight for the Hindenburg Line.

Tactically, on account of the Argonne Forest and its strong defenses, the most difficult portion of the whole line to break through was the Verdun-Reims sector; but strategically it offered greater advantages than any other. The reason was this: An attack pushed northward from this sector to Mézières and Sedan would cut every east and west line of railway south of the Ardennes Mountains, upon which the Germans were depending to a great extent for their supplies and munitions of war; and would leave remaining but one east and west line; namely, the Charleroi-Namur-Liege-Aix-la-Chapelle Railway, which passes to the northward of the Ardennes and just south of the southeast extremity of Holland. Such an attack, if successful, could not but produce stupendous results; for with all the east and west

lines cut, except the Charleroi-Namur-Liege-Aix-la-Chapelle Railway, there would at once be a mighty effort on the part of the German Army to retire along this line as far east as the Meuse River, before the Allies could push forward from Mézières to Namur, sever this line of railway, and capture a good part of the German Army.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It may, perhaps, be of interest to the reader to know that the author of this book, who was on duty with the General Staff of the U. S. Army at the War College, Washington, D. C., during these battles on the Western Front, wrote on September 12, 1918, the day General Pershing began his attack on the St. Mihiel salient, and just two weeks prior to the beginning of the great thrust through the Argonne Forest towards Mézières and Sedan, the following memorandum and handed it at the time to Brigadier-General Lytle Brown, U. S. Army, President of the Army War College.

#### MEMORANDUM

“Although I am firmly convinced that this war cannot be won solely on the Western and Italian fronts, and have already, in my *Fourth Memorandum on the Strategy of the War*, given my reasons for so believing, yet I do believe that when all the salients, including that of St. Mihiel, are ironed out of the German front by the Allies and the Germans driven back to the Hindenburg Line, an attack can be made on a large scale by the Allies from a certain sector of their front which will straighten out the curved German front bulging towards Paris, compel the Germans to evacuate the greater part of France and Belgium, which they now occupy, and force them back to the line of the Meuse. A successful attack on a large scale pushed northward from the Verdun-Reims sector as far as Mézières would do this; for it would sever all the German lines of communication south of the Ardennes Mountains and seriously threaten the Charleroi-Namur-Liege-Aix-la-Chapelle Railway, the only remaining line leading into Germany. Such an attack as here outlined could not but produce stupendous results; for with all the east and west

However, it is evident that such a thrust as here outlined would be impossible of execution unless the Germans along other portions of the Hindenburg Line were kept occupied by Allied attacks; since, otherwise, German reserve divisions along the line could be withdrawn to the threatened flank in such numbers as to put a stop to the thrust.

On the other flank, too, there were strategical considerations of importance. It will be noticed that an Allied thrust eastward through West

lines of railway cut, except the line which passes just south of the southeast extremity of Holland through Namur, Liege, and Aix-la-Chapelle, there would at once be a mighty effort on the part of the German Army to retire along this line as far east as the Meuse River before the Allies could push northward from Mézières, cut this line of railway and perhaps capture a good part of the German Army. In other words, a successful thrust northward from the Verdun-Reims sector as far as Mézières, would be bound to cause the evacuation of the greater part of France and Belgium by the Germans; and if pushed still farther northward might result in the capture of a considerable part of the German Army now in France and Belgium.

“Of course, in breaking through the German line from this sector and pushing northward, as here outlined, the Allies would create for themselves an immense salient, vulnerable to German attack; but in this case, as the salient would itself cut through several important lines of communication of the Germans, depriving them from obtaining supplies and munitions, and would point in a most threatening way to their only other remaining line of communication, their great concern would be, not in striking to destroy the salient, but in fighting to hold open their only line of retreat, so as to enable them to get out of the great pocket in which this strategical thrust had placed them before they were forced to surrender.”

Flanders towards Brussels would threaten not only the communications of the German troops along the Belgian coast and compel their retirement eastward towards Antwerp, but would threaten also the communications of the German troops occupying the Lille region; and, if pushed far enough, would likewise seriously threaten the Charleroi-Namur-Liege-Aix-la-Chapelle Railway. Evidently, such a thrust, taken in conjunction with the thrust northward from the Verdun-Reims sector, would be the first step towards making of the German front an immense salient; and the farther these thrusts penetrated into German occupied territory, the greater the salient would become and the more vulnerable and dangerous it would be. But the two attacks on the flanks were not enough. It was necessary for Foch to attack also some intermediate sectors of the line in order to prevent Ludendorff from withdrawing his reserve divisions in great numbers from these sectors to the menaced flanks. But where was he to strike in order to do this and at the same time produce the greatest strategical results?



Examining the theaters of operations, we find that a thrust northeastward from the St. Quentin-Cambrai front to Maubeuge and Valenciennes, and thence eastward and northeastward towards Dinant, Charleroi, and Mons, would, taken in connection with the Flanders thrust, create a dangerous German salient in the Lille region; and, taken in connection with the Meuse-Argonne thrust, create a dangerous German salient in the Laon region. Moreover, such a thrust would sever the Metz-Sedan-Mézières-Hirson-Maubeuge Railway leading into the Lille district and make necessary the immediate retirement of the Germans from that salient; and it would also threaten the Aix-la-Chapelle-Liege-Namur-Charleroi Railway upon which the German troops in Western Belgium were almost wholly dependent for their supplies and reinforcements; and should it reach Dinant, would cut in two the German armies and prevent any retirement of German troops northward from Mézières and northeastward from Hirson to Namur.

Inasmuch as an Allied thrust northward from the Verdun-Reims front towards Sedan and

Mézières would cut all the railway lines south of the Ardennes Mountains; and a thrust eastward from the Flanders front towards Brussels and northeastward from the St. Quentin-Cambrai front towards Charleroi and Mons, would threaten the single remaining east and west line to the north of these mountains; and inasmuch as the thrust from the St. Quentin-Cambrai front would also, if pushed eastward from Maubeuge to Dinant, cut the German armies in two, we can appreciate how extremely important, strategically, such a plan of operations would be. And we can appreciate also the importance to the strategical situation of the fact that the Ardennes Mountains form a barrier across a considerable part of the entrance from Germany into Northern France and Belgium, and that this barrier has necessitated building the east and west railway lines on each side of them.

Of course, in breaking through the German lines from the Verdun-Reims, Flanders, and St. Quentin-Cambrai fronts, the Allies would create three salients more or less vulnerable to German attack; but since each would threaten seri-

ously the communications of the Germans occupying Northern France and Belgium, Ludendorff's great concern would be, not to strike to destroy the Allied salients, but to fight to hold open the railways so that his armies could withdraw behind the Meuse before they were cut off and forced to surrender.

Here, again, that principle of strategy would apply, that when an army makes a thrust in such a direction as to cut or seriously threaten the communications of the other, that army whose communications are first cut or seriously threatened will invariably turn back to fight for them rather than strike at the communications of the adversary. Hence, it followed that Marshal Foch need not have had and, seemingly, as the sequel will show, did not have, any great concern about the communications of his own troops occupying these salients. Accordingly, he was able to give almost his entire attention to the offensive operations against Ludendorff.

Then, again, there were other reasons, mainly on account of location, why the vulnerability of these three Allied salients would be slight. In the thrust towards Sedan from the Verdun-

Reims front, the Americans would be protected on the east side of the salient by the Meuse River; and, on the west side, by the French, who were to advance on the left of the Americans. In the thrust from the St. Quentin-Cambrai front towards Charleroi and Mons, the British would be protected on their right by the Sambre River and Canal. And, in the Flanders district, the push eastward must of necessity cause the evacuation by the Germans of the coast country; and this would give to the Flanders salient on the north side the protection of the English Channel.

Observant of all these things, Marshal Foch made his plans accordingly, and in the last week in September opened his campaign against the Hindenburg Line with these three great thrusts. Practically at the same time, or very soon afterwards, other attacks were also made from intermediate sectors, where there seemed to be favorable chances of success; but these three major thrusts were the ones that had the principal strategical bearing upon the conduct of the campaign.

An American army under General Pershing

having been assembled as secretly as possible along the Meuse-Argonne sector between Verdun and Reims, quietly, on the night of September 25, took the place of the French who had held this portion of the line for a long period; and on the morning of September 26 began the attack, which, in the face of most desperate resistance, was to continue during the next six weeks to force back the Germans slowly but surely to the very gates of Sedan.

On the first day of the attack the Americans pushed through the first line of defenses, and on the two following days penetrated the German position to a depth of from three to seven miles, taking Haucourt, Malancourt, Varennes, Charpentry, Véry, Montfaucon, Gercourt, and other villages. East of the Meuse the Twenty-sixth American Division, which was with the Second Colonial French Corps, captured at the same time Marchéville and Rievillé,<sup>1</sup> thus giving further protection to the right flank of Pershing's army. At the same time the French, on the left of the Americans, west of the Argonne,

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<sup>1</sup> General Pershing, in *Annual Report of Secretary of War*, 1918, p. 77.

also succeeded in pushing well to the front. In this attack by the Americans, as well as in practically all subsequent ones against the Hindenburg Line by the Allies, tanks played an important and often a determining part.

The attack had taken Ludendorff by surprise; but seeing at once his peril, he immediately ordered a number of reserve divisions to the threatened front; and began a series of counter-attacks, supported by heavy artillery fire containing many gas shells. By these means the Americans and French, after a few days' fighting, were temporarily checked; nevertheless, they continued to exercise such strong pressure on the Germans, pushing forward here and there in the face of most determined and desperate resistance, that Ludendorff was compelled to continue ordering more and more divisions from other parts of his line to this menaced flank.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the line the Belgians and British from Dixmude southward to the Lys River had taken the offensive and, driving eastward, had swept the Germans across the Passchendaele Ridge into the Flan-

ders plain below. This thrust, reaching in its first push almost to Roulers and Menin, made it necessary for the Germans to retire eastward forthwith from the Belgian coast and seriously threatened their communications in the Lille region to the southward.

Seeing, as before, the great peril to his troops, should this thrust of the Belgians and British not be stopped, Ludendorff at once hurried reserves to this front also from other parts of his line and, finally, succeeded in checking it temporarily, just as he had checked the great American Meuse-Argonne thrust.

But scarcely had these thrusts got well under way when Foch launched the attack from the Cambrai-St. Quentin front. This attack was made by Byng's and Rawlinson's British armies, assisted by the Second American Corps, composed of the Twenty-seventh and Thirtieth divisions.<sup>1</sup> The attack began on September 27

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<sup>1</sup> Of the fighting done by these two American divisions in this attack General Pershing, in his report to the Secretary of War, says:

"It was the fortune of our Second Corps, composed of the Twenty-seventh and Thirtieth divisions, which had remained with the British, to have a place of honor in cooperation with the Australian Corps on September 29 and October 1 in the assault on the Hindenburg Line where the St. Quentin Canal

in the vicinity of Cambrai, and on the two following days extended southward to St. Quentin on a front of about twenty-five miles. The fighting about Le Catelet, midway between Cambrai and St. Quentin, was severe, but success finally crowned the efforts of the British along the whole line. St. Quentin and Cambrai were both captured and the Hindenburg Line completely broken through. Nor did the thrust stop there. On October 5 the British captured a large number of prisoners and advanced some four or five miles; and on October 8 they struck a decisive blow, which, in the next four days, carried them into the open country about Le Cateau, some fourteen miles east of the Hindenburg Line. Every mile of this advance deepened and made more vulnerable the Lille

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passes through a tunnel under a ridge. The Thirtieth Division speedily broke through the main line of defense for all its objectives, while the Twenty-seventh pushed on impetuously through the main line until some of its elements reached Gouy. In the midst of the maze of trenches and shell craters and under cross fire from machine guns the other elements fought desperately against odds. In this and in later actions, from October 6 to October 19, our Second Corps captured over six thousand prisoners and advanced over thirteen miles. The spirit and aggressiveness of these divisions have been highly praised by the British Army commander under whom they served."—Annual Report of Secretary of War, 1918, pp. 77 and 78.



and Laon salients. Maubeuge and Valenciennes now became the new objectives of the British along this front.

Meanwhile, along other sectors of the line the Allies had made much progress. South of St. Quentin, Debeney's French army had pushed forward on the right of the British. Mangin's army, assisted by an Italian division, had driven the Germans from the Chemin-des-Dames. The armies of Gouraud and Berthelot, assisted by the Second and Thirty-sixth American divisions had advanced north of Reims.<sup>1</sup> And the Americans had swept the Germans out of the Argonne Forest. In short, Foch had won the great fight for the Hindenburg Line.

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<sup>1</sup> In his report of the fighting of these two American divisions in this attack General Pershing says: "On October 2-9 our Second and Thirty-sixth divisions were sent to assist the French in an important attack against the old German positions before Reims. The Second conquered the complicated defense works on their front against a persistent defense worthy of the grimmest period of trench warfare and attacked the strongly held wooded hill of Blanc Mont, which they captured in a second assault, sweeping over it with consummate dash and skill. This division then repulsed strong counter-attacks before the village and cemetery of Ste. Étienne and took the town, forcing the Germans to fall back before Reims and yield positions they had held since September, 1914. On October 9 the Thirty-sixth Division relieved the Second and, in its first experience under fire, withstood very severe artillery bombardment and rapidly took up the pursuit of the enemy, now retiring behind the Aisne."—Annual Report of Secretary of War, 1918, p. 78.

This great fight, which was begun by the Americans and French on September 26, 1918, and which practically ended on or about October 5, 1918, when the British broke through the Cambrai-St. Quentin front, may be looked upon as one of the great steps in that greatest of all battles in the world's history, which began with Foch's counter-offensive of July 18, 1918, and did not end until the armistice of November 11, 1918, and which has been appropriately named by General Malleterre of the French Army, the Battle of Liberation.

✓ The fact that for more than four years the  
↓ Germans had held the Hindenburg Line against repeated and determined efforts of the Allies to take it; and then within ten days in the fall of 1918 had lost it; leads one to inquire how it was that Foch accomplished all this in so short a time. It was not that the Germans had shown any diminution in their fighting qualities; for they had never fought harder or more desperately. How then did he win such success? The answer is that he won it by his tank attacks; by the superior *morale* of his troops, which had been enormously increased by previous victo-

ries; by taking advantage of the strategy of the situation to attack the Germans in such directions as to threaten their communications; by bringing a preponderating force against his adversary on every battle front; by continuing to maintain the offensive after he had assumed it in his great counter-attack of July 18, 1918; and by hard blows and terrific fighting all along the line.

The tanks were an enormous help in breaking through the barbed-wire entanglements and defenses of the Hindenburg Line, and in putting the machine guns of the enemy out of action. Indeed, they were of such immense help that it may with truth be said that without them the Hindenburg Line probably would never have been breached and taken. This leads to the conjecture that if Germany had been as successful in developing this new and tremendously effective implement of war as were the Allies, the tanks on each side would to a great extent have neutralized each other; in which case the Germans most probably would have been able to hold the line, since, even with the help of the tanks, the Allies were able to break through only

after the hardest fighting involving an enormous sacrifice of life.

There were in this war many surprising things relating to weapons of combat; but there was none, perhaps, more surprising than that the deciding factor in this great battle was the tank, an implement of destruction which no man ever had dreamed of prior to the war, and which was not developed until long after the war's beginning nor perfected until just a few months before its close.

The *morale* of the Allied soldiers at this stage of the campaign was at its highest. Their victories already won had aroused in them great enthusiasm. Obstacles, which a few weeks before might have seemed insurmountable, appeared, after these victories, insignificant to them. Their hopes had arisen; their blood had quickened; they had begun to feel that nothing could check them in their victories, nothing stop them in their progress.

Marshal Foch saw deeply into the strategy of the situation. Having ironed out all the German salients, he began operations against the Hindenburg Line with two powerful attacks on

the flanks, which threatened at once the communications of the German armies occupying Northern France and Belgium; and he immediately followed these attacks with a great blow from the Cambrai-St. Quentin front, which threatened still further the German communications. The attack on the flanks made of the German line an immense salient and the attack between the flanks divided this immense salient into two salients. Where there were no salients, Foch attacked in such directions as to make them; where there was little vulnerability in the line, he attacked in such directions as to make it much more vulnerable. In each case he looked beyond the tactical victory into the strategy of the campaign. In each case he looked to the communications of the enemy. Every thrust and nearly every attack from the beginning of his counter-offensive against the Château-Thierry salient to the driving of the Germans out of and beyond the Hindenburg Line were in such directions as to cut or threaten the communications of the enemy and produce important strategical results. Even when, as in the Argonne, the tactical difficulties

were greater than along any other portion of the line, he chose this sector from which to make the great American thrust, knowing that a break-through here would produce the greatest strategical results. Indeed, a break in the line here and an advance to Sedan and Mézières would have necessitated the immediate withdrawal of the Germans from Northern France and Belgium, regardless of whether there were any successful attacks made along other portions of the Hindenburg Line. In fact, if when the Americans and French had reached Sedan and Mézières, the Germans had still held the Hindenburg Line, from, say, midway between Reims and St. Quentin northward through St. Quentin, Cambrai, and Lens to Nieuport, their position, strategically, would have been much more dangerous than it was on the day of the armistice, when they were occupying a line approximately parallel to this, but some forty miles farther eastward. The reason for this is, that the Germans at the time of the armistice, being some forty miles nearer the line of the Meuse than they would have been along the Hindenburg Line from the vicinity of St. Quen-

tin northward to the coast, were in a much more favorable position for withdrawing behind that river before their communications were severed. Or, to state the reason a little differently, the Americans and French at Sedan and Mézières were much nearer Namur on the Charleroi-Namur-Liege-Aix-la-Chapelle Railway than the Germans would have been along the Hindenburg Line northward from St. Quentin.

However, it should not be inferred from this reasoning that Foch's attacks along other portions of the Hindenburg Line than the Meuse-Argonne front were unnecessary. On the contrary, they were necessary and of the greatest importance, for without these attacks to hold the enemy in front, the Germans would have been able to mass such overwhelming forces in the Meuse-Argonne region as to prevent any Allied advance there, which would have put a stop to the carrying out of Foch's strategical plan.

During this great fight for the Hindenburg Line Marshal Foch brought greatly superior numbers against his adversary on every battle front, thus carrying out that principle of

strategy of always being stronger than the enemy when possible at the point of attack. It was due in no inconsiderable measure to the carrying out of this principle which enabled him to break through the Hindenburg Line in so many places. But he was able to do this only by reason of the fact that during this period he had on the Western Front a preponderating force over his adversary of approximately 371,000 fighting men out of a total of 1,594,000.<sup>1</sup>

From July 18, 1918, when Foch began his great counter-offensive, until the armistice of November 11, the fighting on the Western Front never ceased. It was one continuous battle composed of many smaller battles, in which Foch having got the offensive at the start continued to maintain it to the end. He was a thorough believer in offensive warfare. He knew that the *offensive alone promises decisive results*. On the offensive, a general can follow his own plan; on the defensive, he must conform to that of his adversary. On the offensive, the parts of an army can be concentrated,

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<sup>1</sup> *The War with Germany; A Statistical Summary*, p. 104.



and the enemy may be surprised and defeated before he can collect the necessary forces to repel an attack; on the defensive, the parts of an army must be kept separate in order to guard all threatened points till the enemy's point of attack is developed. Then, again, only by acting on the offensive is a commander in a position to bring a superior force upon the battlefield.

Ludendorff also believed in the offensive; but there was this difference between them. Ludendorff made long pauses between his thrusts, which gave the French time in each case to prepare for the next attack; and, finally, gave Foch time to prepare for his great counter-offensive of July 18.

On the other hand, Foch, once having obtained the offensive, struck so rapidly and in such unexpected places that Ludendorff had no time to restore his shattered armies and prepare for offensive operations. In the rapidity with which Foch struck and in the persistency with which he continued to maintain the offensive, his operations were very similar to those of Bonaparte in his first Italian campaign.

There was, however, this great difference. Bonaparte in that wonderful campaign never at any time had within the theater of operations a preponderating force over his adversary, while Foch's forces at this time outnumbered those of Ludendorff by from a quarter to a half million fighting men.<sup>1</sup>

Then, again, this striking in many places—this attacking all along the line—prevented Ludendorff from concentrating his reserves in great numbers upon menaced points, since the weakening of any portion of his line for that purpose might allow the Allies to break through along that front. This method of preventing the sending of reserves to threatened or menaced points was one which General Grant had employed with signal success in the great Civil War in America. Bearing in mind that the commander-in-chief of the Allied armies not only hammered away continuously on the Western Front from July 18 until November 11, but was responsible in great measure for the active operations of the Allied armies in Palestine and, especially, in the Balkans during this

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<sup>1</sup> *The War with Germany; A Statistical Summary*, p. 104.

period,<sup>1</sup> there will be seen a great similarity between the strategy of Foch and that of our own great soldier, U. S. Grant. Indeed, the following extracts from General Grant's report of the operations during the time he was commander-in-chief of the United States armies in the Civil War might be used almost word for word to describe accurately Marshal Foch's strategy. Grant says:

From an early period in the rebellion I had been impressed with the idea that active and continuous operations of all the troops that could be brought into the field, regardless of season and weather, were necessary to a speedy termination of the war. . . . I therefore determined, first: to use the greatest number of troops practicable against the armed force of

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<sup>1</sup> "But the battle was not limited to the Western Front. We must remember that Marshal Foch had command of all the Allied armies on all the fronts and that, except in the case of Italy, he succeeded in planning an ensemble of operations calculated to strike and demoralize the enemy at every point. What happened in the East, then, during September and October was an integral part of the Battle of Liberation. . . . Marshal Foch is a leader who has a comprehensive vision, developed by years of teaching at the *École de Guerre* and by a life of study and reflection. He did not forget that the war had begun in the East and kept constantly in mind the repercussions of the Eastern campaign upon the military situation of Germany in the West and upon the internal moral situation in the German and Austro-Hungarian empires."—General Malleterre, Governor of the *Musée des Invalides* and Military Critic of the *Paris Temps*, in "How the War Was Won," *Harper's Magazine*, April, 1919, p. 609.

the enemy ; preventing him from using the same force at different seasons against first one and then another of our armies, and the possibility of repose for refitting and producing necessary supplies for carrying on resistance. Second, to hammer continuously against the armed force of the enemy and his resources, until by mere attrition, if in no other way, there should be nothing left to him but an equal submission with the loyal section of our common country to the constitution and laws of the land.

In other respects, too, was Marshal Foch very much like General Grant. In campaign and battle both were distinguished for good judgment, clearness of vision, and coolness of head. Not to be anxious ; not to change countenance ; not to be perturbed by unfavorable events, nor to be puffed up by victory ; to be always cool and collected ; to avoid confusion in commands ; to give orders in the midst of battle with perfect composure, these were some of the similar, distinguishing characteristics of these two great soldiers.

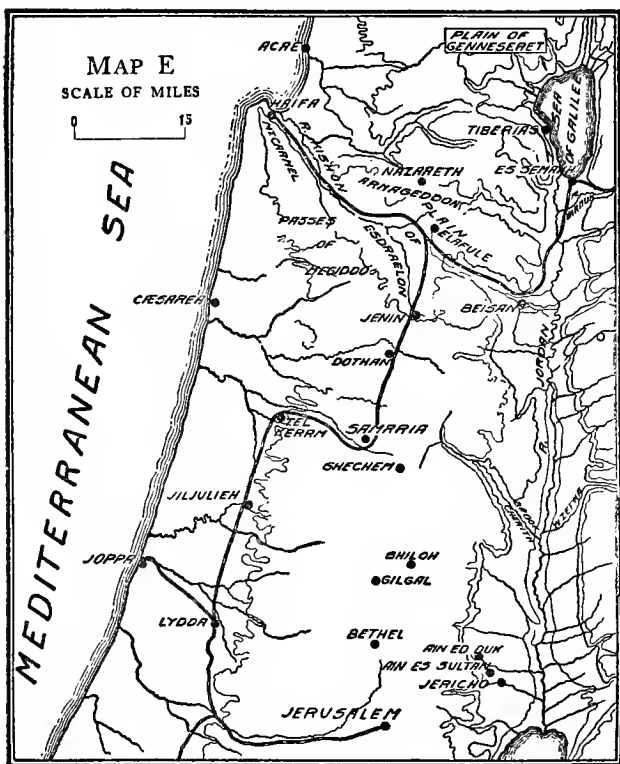
## CHAPTER VII

### ALLIED VICTORIES IN THE EAST

**M**EANWHILE, during the great fight for the Hindenburg Line, there were taking place in Palestine and the Balkans certain events which were destined to have a far-reaching effect upon the strategical situation and conduct of the war on the Western Front.

On September 19, 1918, General Allenby, in command of British, Indian, Australian, and a few French troops in Palestine, attacked the Turks from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. East of the Jordan he was assisted by an Arabian army. In this attack, known as the battle of Samaria, Allenby broke through the Turkish line between that town and the sea and, having pushed his cavalry northward and eastward, succeeded, in the next few days, in cutting the Damascus Railway in rear of the Turks and in seizing the passages of the Jordan, thereby closing their last avenue of

escape. The result was that a large part of the Turkish Army was enveloped and captured.



*Where Allenby Annihilated the Turkish Armies*

What remained was routed and dissipated, a few thousand incapable of further resistance,

escaping towards Aleppo. These operations annihilated the Turkish Army in Palestine and put Allenby's army in a position where, by a rapid march northward, it could reach Aleppo ahead of the retreating Turkish Mesopotamian Army, sever its communications at that point, and compel its surrender. On September 25, the day before Foch opened his great attack on the Hindenburg Line along the Meuse-Argonne front, the British War Office announced that General Allenby had taken more than 40,000 prisoners and 265 guns in the Palestine offensive.

While these stirring events were happening in Palestine and Syria, the Allied forces were meeting with similar success in the Balkans. On September 15, 1918, General Franchet d'Espérey, commanding the Allied armies on the Salonica front in Macedonia, attacked the center of the Bulgarian line across the high ground in the angle formed by the Vardar and Cerna rivers, broke through the line, and pushed northward some twelve or fifteen miles up the Vardar Valley. This attack, followed a few days later by other attacks against the Bul-

garian line east of the Vardar in the vicinity of Lake Doiran, opened a great gap through the center of the Bulgarian line across the Vardar Valley, along which passes the Nish-Uskub-Veles-Salonica Railway. Upon this railway the Bulgarians and Austrians in Macedonia depended almost entirely for their supplies, munitions, and reinforcements. Consequently, when the Allied forces pushed into this gap, seized the railway, and ascended the valley towards Uskub, they cut the communications, not only of the Bulgarians east of the Vardar, but of the Bulgarians and Austrians west of that river, and thus placed them in an extremely perilous position.

On September 26, the day that Foch began his great offensive along the Meuse-Argonne front, the Serbians reported an advance of seventy-five miles up the Vardar Valley and the capture of the fortress and railway center of Veles; and, on the same day, the French War Office stated that the Allied troops on the Salonica front had captured in this offensive more than ten thousand Bulgarians. On the following day the Bulgarians asked for an armi-



stice and, two days later, on September 29, 1918, withdrew from the war by accepting the purely military terms dictated by General d'Espérey which were to be effective until the peace conference should determine the exact conditions of peace. By the terms agreed upon, the Bulgarian Army was to withdraw from Greek and Serbian territory and demobilize, and Allied troops were permitted to use strategic points in Bulgaria and all means of communication. The Austrian Army on the right of the Bulgarians, having lost their communications also *via* Uskub, were forced to make their way, as best they could, by irregular trails over the hills and mountains of Albania back to their own territory.

The Allied victory in the Balkans not only disposed of Bulgaria but it separated Turkey from Germany and Austria, severed the Berlin-Constantinople-Bagdad Railway, cut in two the great theater of operations of the Central Powers, and laid open to attack the communications of the Austrian Army in Italy and of the German Army on the Western Front. Coming as it did right on the heels of General Allenby's

great victory in Palestine against the Turks and just at the time when Foch on the Western Front was beginning to make great breaches in the Hindenburg Line, it was a lethal blow to Germany which sealed the fate of the Central Powers. It meant that Germany had lost the war;<sup>1</sup> for from the beginning the strategical and vital center of the whole theater of war had been in the Balkans; and just as soon as the Salonica Army was sufficiently reinforced to make a successful campaign against the Bulgarians,<sup>2</sup> and cut the Berlin-Constantinople-Bagdad Railway, over which the Turks were obtaining munitions of war from Germany, while Germany and Austria were getting cotton and other supplies from Asia Minor, the entire

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<sup>1</sup> "Whatever resistance the Germans might have been able to make in the West, their military defeat was inevitable after the victories in the Orient over the Bulgarians and Turks." —General Malletterre, in "How the War Was Won," *Harper's Magazine*, April, 1919, p. 609.

<sup>2</sup> "Marshal Foch knew what was happening in Bulgaria. General Guillaumat had pointed out to him that a brisk attack had serious chances of succeeding, and, if successful would bring about the defection of Bulgaria. The moment the tide had turned in the West, and Marshal Foch knew that Germany would be unable to send fresh troops to Bulgaria, he gave the order for the advance from Salonica. The offensive succeeded in a way perhaps more decisive, and certainly more quickly, than was hoped for.—General Malletterre, in "How the War Was Won," *Harper's Magazine*, April, 1919, p. 610.

scheme of defense of the Central Powers fell to pieces like a house of cards.

The reasons were these: With the Turks deprived of munitions of war, and this deprivation coming immediately after General Allenby's masterly movements against them in Palestine, they had no alternative but to withdraw from the war and seek such favorable terms as they could obtain. This left the Salonica Army free to move northward into Austria, where it was certain to be reinforced by many Jugo-Slavs and Roumanians, who were ready and anxious to join with the Allies in striking a powerful blow against Austria and Germany. Such an advance into Austria through Budapest to Vienna would cut the communications of the Austrian Army in Italy—the only army of any consequence left to Austria—deprive it of its supplies, and compel its surrender. Indeed, the mere threat of such an advance upon its communications kept it in such a demoralized state that, when attacked about three weeks later by the Italian Army, it was easily driven from its strong defensive positions, and almost destroyed.

In this connection, it is worthy of notice that Napoleon's march down the Danube in 1805 and seizure of the Austrian capital, after capturing an Austrian army under General Mack at Ulm, paralyzed the operations of the Austrian Army under the Archduke Charles in Italy and caused him to fall back before Masséna upon Vienna; and that Napoleon's great victory over the Austrian and Russian armies at Austerlitz a few days later, not only resulted in the reconquering of Italy, but compelled both Austria and Russia to sue for peace. So in this war, as in the days of Napoleon, a successful battle fought by the Allies in the vicinity of Vienna would have conquered for them all Northern Italy.

Austria once defeated and out of the war, the way would be left open for the Salonica and Italian armies to unite and attack Germany from the south. Such an attack would not only deprive her of the wheat, oil, platinum, and other supplies, which she was obtaining from Roumania and Ukraine; but, when pushed northward, would destroy or threaten the communications of her army on the Western Front with Berlin and other important German cities.

Moreover, an advance from Vienna through the friendly territory of Bohemia would bring the Allied Army almost to Dresden and within one hundred and twenty-five miles of Berlin. Such an invasion of her territory would mean, of course, the destruction of her railways, canals, and cities; the blowing up of her bridges and munition plants; and the laying waste of her fields. And there was no way to prevent it; for she could not detach for this purpose any troops from the Western Front, since she was not then even able to hold her own there. Even had troops been available, she could not continue to feed them and her own people, with the British blockading her northern coasts and her sources of supply to the south destroyed. Seeing that all this would mean the bringing home to her people the ruin and desolation of war and, finally, the inevitable annihilation or capture of her great army on the Western Front, she realized that there was nothing to do but to make terms with the Allies.

On September 28, the day following the request made by the Bulgarian Army for an armistice, Field Marshal Hindenburg and Gen-

eral Ludendorff considered the situation and decided that the need for immediate action had become imperative. Accordingly, on September 29, they dispatched their representative, Major Baron von dem Busche, to Berlin to acquaint the German authorities of their decision. On September 30 the Major met the Chancellor, Prince Maximilian of Baden, and the Vice-Chancellor, von Payer, in Berlin and explained to them Hindenburg's and Ludendorff's views. On October 2, he appeared before the assembled Reichstag leaders and in a speech made clear to them the military situation and concluded with these words:

We can carry on the war for a substantial further period, we can cause the enemy further heavy losses, we can lay waste his country as we retire, but we cannot win the war.

Realizing this fact, and in view of the course of events in general, the Field Marshal and General Ludendorff have resolved to propose to His Majesty that we bring the fighting to a close, in order to avoid further sacrifices on the part of the German people and their allies.

Just as our great offensive was brought to a stop on July 15, immediately it was seen that its continuation would involve undue sacrifice of life, so now we

must make up our minds to abandon the further prosecution of the war as hopeless. There is still time for this. The German Army has still the strength to keep the enemy at bay for months, to achieve local successes, and to cause further losses to the *Entente*. But each new day brings the enemy nearer to his aim, and makes him the less ready to conclude a reasonable peace with us.

We must accordingly lose no time. Every twenty-four hours that pass may make our position worse, and give the enemy a clearer view of our present weakness.

That might have the most disastrous consequences both for the prospects of peace and for the military position.

Neither the army nor the people should do anything that might betray weakness. While the peace offer is made, you at home must show a firm front, to prove that you have the unbreakable will to continue the fight if the enemy refuse us peace or offer only humiliating conditions.

If this should prove to be the case, the army's power to resist will depend on a firm spirit being maintained at home, and on the good *morale* that will permeate from home to the front.<sup>1</sup>

On the next day, October 3, Hindenburg himself appeared before a meeting of the German cabinet at Berlin and in the following signed

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<sup>1</sup> *Ludendorff's Own Story*, vol. II, pp. 380 and 381.

statement set forth the views of the General Headquarters of the German Army:

General Headquarters holds to the demand made by it on Monday, the 29th of September of this year, for an immediate offer of peace to the enemy.

As a result of the collapse of the Macedonian front and of the weakening of our reserves in the West, which this has necessitated, and in view of the impossibility of making good the very heavy losses of the last few days, there appears to be now no possibility, to the best of human judgment, of winning peace from our enemies by force of arms.

The enemy, on the other hand, is continually throwing new and fresh reserves into the fight.

The German Army still holds firmly together, and beats off victoriously all the enemy's attacks, but the position grows more acute day by day, and may at any time compel us to take desperate measures.

In these circumstances the only right course is to give up the fight, in order to spare useless sacrifices for the German people and their allies. Every day wasted costs the lives of thousands of brave Germans.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, on October 4, 1918, just five days after Bulgaria withdrew from the war, the German Government requested "the immediate conclusion of an armistice on land and water and in the air."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ludendorff's Own Story*, vol. II, p. 386.

<sup>2</sup> *Buchan, Nelson's History of the War*, vol. XXIV, pp. 11 and 127.



This, then, was the situation: Bulgaria had been defeated and had withdrawn from the war. Turkey, as a result of the annihilation of her Palestine army and the victory of the Allies in the Balkans, had become absolutely powerless to continue the struggle and was making preparations to surrender. Austria, with her whole southern boundary open to attack and the communications of her army in Italy seriously threatened, was on the verge of complete collapse. There was needed only one more thrust of the Italian Army against her already partially demoralized troops on the Piave to defeat, rout, and dissipate them and force her, too, out of the war. And Germany, her armies short of food and her people threatened with starvation, her supplies from overseas and outside countries cut off, and her territory open to invasion from the south and no available troops with which to stop it, knew that she was beaten, not through the defeat of her great army on the Western Front, for that was still fighting without showing the least sign of demoralization, and was to continue to fight desperately, for a period of five weeks through a

most skillfully conducted retreat;<sup>1</sup> but nevertheless beaten—beaten by the collapse of her rear,<sup>2</sup> brought about by the great blow in the Balkans.

<sup>1</sup>“Whatever reports were sent out to the contrary, we know absolutely that the Boche military machine worked with precision to the last.”—George Pattullo, in *Saturday Evening Post*, February 22, 1919.

Frank H. Simonds, in November, 1918, *Review of Reviews*, writing under date of October 21, 1918, p. 482, says: “If she [Germany] battles on there will be hard fighting and grave sacrifices, for even in defeat her armies continue to fight well and her military machine has, as yet, shown no sign of disintegration.”

<sup>2</sup>“While the army still stood, the nation collapsed behind it.”—Frank H. Simonds, in *Review of Reviews*, December, 1918, p. 592.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GERMANY'S SCHEME FOR WORLD DOMINION

IN ORDER to appreciate more fully the staggering effect which the defeat of the Bulgarian Army in the Balkans had upon Germany, and to gain in addition a clearer conception of the general strategical situation, not only on the Western Front but throughout the whole theater of war, it is necessary, before taking up Ludendorff's great retreat from the Hindenburg Line, to describe briefly the origin, progress, plan, and characteristics of the great German scheme of world dominion.

The one central fact around which cluster all the causes, consequences, and events of the war, is that the German Emperor, William II, with his army and by the help of his allies and their armies, purposed to build up a mighty empire, extending the influence and power of Germany beyond Europe into Asia and Africa and even, perchance, into America—a mighty empire

which, stretching from the North and Baltic seas through the very heart of Europe into the Balkans, and thence through Asia Minor to Egypt and the Persian Gulf, should dominate all Europe and, through Europe, perhaps all the world.

#### THE BAGDAD RAILWAY

The first steps in this push to the East (*Drang nach Osten*) were taken as early as 1888 when a German company obtained from the Sultan of Turkey a ninety-nine year concession to exploit the Haidar-Pasha (Scutari)-Ismid Railway and to build and operate an extension from Ismid to Angora. In February, 1893, this company—The Anatolian Railway Company—obtained a concession to build and operate another extension from Ismid to Konia. This extension was completed in 1896. Then, in 1898, there was obtained from the Sultan by Emperor William himself, who was then making his famous visit to Constantinople and thence to the Holy Land, a promise of a concession for the continuation of this railway from Konia to Basra (Bassora), at the head of the Persian Gulf. These concessions, which were followed

by others, covered what is known as the Bagdad Railway project which, when finished, was to extend from Haidar-Pasha (Scutari) opposite Constantinople, through Konia, Aleppo, and Bagdad, to Basra on the Persian Gulf.

By these concessions the Bagdad Railway Company was also authorized not only to build and operate a number of branch lines, the most important of which was the line from Aleppo running down the Syrian coast through Damascus to Jerusalem, but to establish steamship service on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, to build docks and deepen harbors at Alexandretta, Bagdad, and Basra, to exploit certain mines and forests, to make use of natural water power, to build electric power plants, to have a monopoly of the brick and tile works in the region of the railways, and to pipe water from the Taurus Mountain gorges to the arid plains of Karaman and Konia.<sup>1</sup>

When completed, this railway with its branch line from Aleppo to Jerusalem would extend the Hamburg-Berlin-Prague-Vienna-Budapest-

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<sup>1</sup> Géraud, "A New German Empire: The Story of the Baghdad Railway," in *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1914, p. 960.

Belgrade-Sofia-Constantinople Railway through Asia Minor to Basra at the head of the Persian Gulf, and to Palestine on the east Mediterranean shore. This line, passing entirely through Europe and Asia Minor from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf, would form one of the greatest railway systems of the world.

The Bagdad Railway was promoted by the Deutsche Bank and was to be built by the Krupps and Mannesmanns.<sup>1</sup> Its purpose was to provide an outlet in Asiatic Turkey for Westphalian and other German industries and to become the entering wedge that would eventually, perhaps, split the British Empire asunder. Here were millions of industrious people but little given to manufacturing who offered a market for German wares.<sup>2</sup> Here were harbors to be deepened; docks, railways, and irrigation systems to be constructed. Here were vast tracts of waste, arid land which needed only water to make them what they had been in ancient days — the garden spots of the world. And near here, under British control and within

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<sup>1</sup> Howe, "The Heart of the War," in *Harper's Magazine*, April, 1918, p. 729.

<sup>2</sup> Howe, *Why War?*, p. 215.

but a short distance of the termini of the Bagdad Railway in Mesopotamia and Palestine, were Southern Persia, Egypt, and the Suez Canal, whose occupation by Germany would permanently end British trade with India and other Oriental countries.

From the start William II had interested himself in the building of the Bagdad Railway. In connection with it he had visited the Sultan in 1889;<sup>1</sup> but it was on his dramatic second visit to Constantinople in 1898 and thence to the Holy Land, made with great pomp of power, that he pledged his undying friendship to the sanguinary Sultan, Abdul Hamid II, known in history as the "Red Sultan," and laid the foundation for those concessions and conventions, which then or subsequently ratified became virtually the charter authorizing the enterprise.<sup>2</sup> At the same time he succeeded in having the British and French concessions and interests in the railways of Asia Minor either arbitrarily revoked or reduced to naught.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Guyot, *The Causes and Consequences of the War*, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> "A New German Empire: The Story of the Baghdad Railway," in *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1914, pp. 959 and 960.

<sup>3</sup> Bracq, *The Provocation of France*, p. 69.

It was on the occasion of this visit, while in Palestine on October 31, 1898, that he appeared in a Protestant church as the central figure of certain ceremonies representing himself as the secular head of the Reformed Faith in Germany; and, on the same day, raised his imperial flag on Mount Zion as patron and protector of the German Catholics in the Holy Land. And it was on the occasion of the same visit, eight days later at Damascus, that he proclaimed his everlasting friendship for the "Red Sultan" in the following words: "Let His Majesty, the Sultan, as well as the three hundred millions of Mohammedans who venerate him as their caliph, be assured that the German Emperor will always remain their friend."<sup>1</sup>

All these efforts, ceremonies, and speeches had but one end in view: the development of Germany into an Asiatic-European world power. This railway linking Turkey to Germany through the Balkans was a bridge to the Orient which offered immense opportunities for trade and commerce and a chance to develop one of the richest unexploited portions of the earth,

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<sup>1</sup> Lewin, *The German Road to the East*, pp. 105 and 106.



where once had flourished the greatest empires of the world. It was the entering wedge which would enable Germany to obtain ultimate control of Turkey and her twenty million people. And the control of Turkey once obtained by Germany, either by this means or by an alliance with her, would, in case of war with the *Entente* Powers, be of the greatest value to her strategically; since, at the very start, it would not only cut off Russia through the closing of the Dardanelles from communication with France and Great Britain, but would enable her to strike through Syria at Egypt and the Suez Canal, a vital link connecting the British Isles with Persia, India, and Australia.

#### THE DREAM OF WORLD EMPIRE

A German Empire that should dominate all Europe and, perhaps, the world was the dream of William II. It seems to have been almost constantly in his mind from the first meeting with the Sultan in 1889 until, and even after, the great World War began in 1914. This is shown by his speeches and proclamations. And along with this idea was another, that the Ger-

mans were a "chosen people," superior to all other peoples in culture and intellect and that he was the instrument of the Almighty to lead them, by the help of his army, to the accomplishment of great deeds—to the foundation of a mighty German World Power.

"Remember," said he in his proclamation to the Army of the East in 1914,

. . . . that you are the chosen people! The Spirit of the Lord has descended upon me because I am the German Emperor!

I am the instrument of the Almighty. I am His sword, His agent. Woe and death to all those who shall oppose my will! Woe and death to those who do not believe in my mission! Woe and death to the cowards!

Let them perish, all the enemies of the German people. God demands their destruction, God, who, by my mouth, bids you to do His will!<sup>1</sup>

In 1896, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the German Empire, he stated that the German nation had become

. . . . a world power, the inhabitants of which dwell in all quarters of the globe, bearing with them everywhere German knowledge and German culture.

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<sup>1</sup> *Out of Their Own Mouths*, p. 4.

The time has arrived to link this greater German Empire close to the home country.<sup>1</sup>

On another occasion he said: "The German nation alone has been called upon to defend, cultivate, and develop great ideas;"<sup>1</sup> and on still another occasion: "Our German nation shall be the rock of granite on which the Almighty shall finish his work of civilizing the world."<sup>1</sup>

On laying the foundation stone of the Roman Museum of Saalburg on October 4, 1900, William II said:

May our German Fatherland become in the future as strongly united, as powerful, as wonderful as was the Roman universal empire; may this end be attained by the united cooperation of our princes, of our peoples, of our armies, and of our citizens, in order that in times to come it may be said of us as it used to be said of yore: *Civis Romanus sum*.<sup>2</sup>

In a speech on March 22, 1905, he said: "God would never have taken such great pains with our German Fatherland and its people if he had not been preparing us for something still

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<sup>1</sup> *The German Road to the East*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Chéradame, *The Pan-German Plot Unmasked*, p. 6.

greater. We are the salt of the earth.”<sup>1</sup> And in a proclamation of June, 1915, he said: “The triumph of the greater Germany which some day must dominate all Europe is the single end for which we are fighting.”<sup>1</sup>

But this dream of world power, frequently referred to as the “From Hamburg to the Persian Gulf” project, was not confined alone to William II. German publicists, captains of industry and of commerce, and many authors, college professors, and officers of the army grasped the importance of it, spoke and wrote in its favor, and extolled the German Emperor for his activity and foresight in promoting it.

As early as 1895 there was published under the authority of the *Alldeutscher Verband*, a powerful Pan-German society, a pamphlet entitled *Great Germany and Central Europe in the Year 1950*<sup>2</sup> in which the author said:

Without doubt the Germans will not alone people the new German Empire thus constituted; but they alone will govern, they alone will exercise all political

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<sup>1</sup> *Out of Their Own Mouths*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Gross-Deutschland und Mittel-Europa um das Jahr 1950*, quoted by Lewin, *The German Road to the East*, pp. 12 and 13.

rights; they alone will serve in the navy and the army; they alone will be able to acquire land. They will thus have, as in the Middle Ages, the sentiment of being a race of masters; nevertheless they will so far condescend that the less important work shall be done by the foreigners under their domination.

In 1911, three years before the beginning of the great World War, Tannenberg, in his book, *Greater Germany, the Work of the Twentieth Century*,<sup>1</sup> set forth a complete program of German expansion, enumerating countries and areas which he believed it was necessary to seize or dominate if Germany was to become a great world power. This Pan-German plan of 1911 provided for the establishment under German rule of a vast Confederation of Middle Europe,<sup>2</sup> comprising, in the west, Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg, and Switzerland, and also a broad strip of France northeast of a line drawn from just south of Belfort to the mouth of the Somme; in the east, large areas of Western Russia, including Russian Poland and the Baltic Provinces of Esthonia, Livonia, and Courland;

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<sup>1</sup> Tannenberg, *Gross-Deutschland, die Arbeit des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*.

<sup>2</sup> Chéradame, *The United States and Pan-Germania*, pp. 11 to 14.

in the southeast, Austria-Hungary and the Balkans. But this great Confederation, which was to have for its basis a great German Empire of Middle Europe, was not to be limited solely to European countries and areas. It was to extend into Asia, Africa, even into America. The control or seizure of Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Southern Persia, Egypt, and the Suez Canal, as well as of certain countries in Africa and a number of islands in the East Indies and Oceania, was also a part of the plan.<sup>1</sup> After advocating this scheme of world empire Tannenberg says: "It is Germany's task today to pass from the position of an European Power to that of a World Power."<sup>2</sup>

Lewin in his introduction to *The German Road to the East* says:

The Pan-German plan for the creation of a great world power, dominating not only Central and South-

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed and full discussion of this plan may be found in *The Pan-German Plot Unmasked*, by André Chéradame; also in *The United States and Pan-Germania*, by the same author. Confirmatory also of the statements in the text much may be found in the book, *Out of Their Own Mouths*. See also *Militarism and Statecraft*, by Munroe Smith, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> *Out of Their Own Mouths*, p. 79.

eastern Europe, but controlling practically the whole of Africa, the Ottoman Empire, Persia, and large portions of the Far East, with a considerable part of South America has been founded upon very exact knowledge acquired by means of an intense application devoted during twenty-five years to every political, ethnographic, economic, social, military, and naval problem affecting the interests of practically every country in the world. This work has been carried on and perfected either by the agents of the powerful and ubiquitous Pan-German League and other similar societies, or by agents of the secret service, which during recent years has undergone a remarkable development.

So thoroughly has this systematic study of foreign countries been revealed during the past few months that it is unnecessary to emphasize the importance and all-embracing nature of the mission of these Teutonic reporters and intriguers. Each agent in his own sphere fitted into the mosaic of the Germanic investigation. There has been a regular hierarchy of trained investigators and reporters carrying their messages to the Fatherland and influencing, in many obscure but useful directions, the policy and political life of foreign countries<sup>1</sup> . . . . The reports of these numerous agents have been forwarded to the Great General Staff at the Wilhelmstrasse, the operations of which have always been directed so as to correspond

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<sup>1</sup> For utterances of prominent Germans along these lines regarding America especially, see *Out of Their Own Mouths*, p. 197, *et seq.*—H. H. S.

as much to political as to military necessities; and to the cabinet of the German Emperor, who has not scrupled to gather the threads of this enormous activity into his own hands.

In 1906, Klaus Wagner, forecasting a German world war, wrote:

It is quite possible that German regiments may march over the Indus to the Ganges; that German troops and Turkish divisions under German general-staff officers may block the Suez Canal and passing through English Egypt join hands with the Khedive, now an English *protégé*, for a general revolt of Islam. It is quite possible that in South Africa probabilities may become facts. It is quite possible that the black, white, and red flag may wave on the towers of Rotterdam and of Calais, and that German war taxes and forced loans will be levied from Paris—a world war such as the sun has never shone on.<sup>1</sup>

In 1914, a few weeks after the great World War began, Maximilian Harden wrote in *Die Zukunft*:

Germany has the right to extend the area of her dominion according to her needs, and the power to obtain this right against all contradiction. . . .

The English, Belgians, French, North and South Slavs, and Japanese are praising one another as possessors and guardians of the most refined human

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<sup>1</sup> Klaus Wagner, in *Krieg* (1906), pp. 115 and 116, quoted in *Out of Their Own Mouths*, pp. 76 and 77.



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civilization and abusing us as barbarians. We should be fools to contradict. To Rome, at the point of death, the Germans who were digging her grave were barbarians. Your civilization, gossips, wafts to us no sweet savor. Get used, as soon as you can, to recognize that on German soil barbarians and warriors are living. They have no time to waste on small talk. They must thrash your armies, capture your general staffs, strew your cuttle-fish arms over the ocean. When Tangiers and Toulon, Antwerp and Calais are subject to their barbaric power, then they will often be glad to have a friend chat with you. . . .

Krupp has given us the hope not only of getting at England in her floating castles, but also of camping widely, before her face, wry with envy, on two seas, on the coasts of Belgium, France, and Morocco. That Germans do not fit into the bustle of peaceable nations is the proudest ornament of the German character. Their manhood does not feminize itself in long peace. War has always been their chief business. . . . Germany means to grow, to coin the achievements of its men and its States into rights of sovereignty before which every head must bow in reverent greeting. Germany is striking. Who gave her leave? Her right is in her might. Therefore she is waging a good war. . . . For the English things are already going badly. . . . From Calais to Dover is not far. Do you doubt our being able to reach them? With such an army any-

thing can be done. And before they receive their punishment there will be no peace. . . .

We are not waging war to punish countries, nor to free enslaved peoples and then warm ourselves in the consciousness of our unselfish nobility. We are waging war because of our solid conviction that Germany, in view of her achievements, has the right to demand and must obtain more room on the earth and a broader sphere of action. . . . Spain and the Netherlands, Rome and Hapsburg, France and England seized, ruled, settled great expanses of the most fertile soil. Now the hour has struck for German supremacy. A peace that does not secure this will leave our efforts unrewarded. . . . We shall stay in the Belgian lowlands, to which we shall add the narrow coast strip to and beyond Calais. . . . From Calais to Antwerp, Flanders, Limburg, and Brabant, up to and including the chain of forts in the Meuse, are to be Prussian. . . . The southern triangle, with Alsace-Lorraine (and Luxemburg, if it likes), is to be shaped into an independent State of the Empire, intrusted to a Catholic princely house—a new Lotharingia. Then Germany would know for what purpose she has shed her blood.

One principle only is to be reckoned with—one which sums up and includes all others—force! Boast of that and scorn all twaddle. Force! that is what rings loud and clear; that is what has distinction and fascination. Force, the fist—that is everything. . . . Let us drop our pitiable efforts to

excuse Germany's action; let us cease heaping contemptible insults upon the enemy. Not against our will were we thrown into this gigantic adventure. It was not imposed on us by surprise. We willed it; we were bound to will it. We do not appear before the tribunal of Europe; we do not recognize any such jurisdiction.

Our force will create a new law in Europe. It is Germany that strikes. When it shall have conquered new fields for its genius, then the priests of all the gods will exalt the war as blessed.<sup>1</sup>

One might be inclined to think that the speeches of William II, and the writings of Tannenbergh, Wagner, and other Pan-Germanists, filled as they were with such an exaggerated sense of national glory and of the importance and superiority of their own countrymen and of themselves, would have had but little influence upon the minds of the conservative and hard-thinking German people; but the truth is that these apostles of Pan-Germanism had an

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<sup>1</sup> Maximilian Harden, in *Die Zukunft* (August-October, 1914), quoted in *Out of Their Own Mouths*, pp. 83 and 85. There is much evidence other than that quoted in the text to show that practically all the influential classes in Germany, except perhaps the socialists, were enthusiastically in favor of this scheme of world power, which William II did so much to promote. See utterances of German rulers, statesmen, savants, publicists, journalists, poets, business men, party leaders, and soldiers, in *Out of Their Own Mouths*; see also pages 37, 38, 39, 55, 64 and 65 of *German Policy Before the War*, by G. W. Prothero.

immense influence over the German people and were able to direct them and their government whither they wished. Their writings and speeches, widely circulated in Germany, were read by hundreds of thousands of the German people and had an immense influence in shaping the German policies at home and abroad in the direction of war and world-wide dominion.

Such was the scheme of a German world empire. Such were the plans, intentions, and aspirations of the German Emperor and the German people.

When it is remembered that William II, from his first meeting with the Sultan of Turkey in 1889, until, and even after, the beginning of the great World War in 1914, had had this grandiose scheme of a mighty German empire almost constantly in mind; that on August 4, 1914, Turkey had signed an alliance with Germany<sup>1</sup> to assist her in carrying forward this great project; and that from the conquest of Serbia in October, November, and December, 1915, until the defeat and overthrow of the Turks and

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<sup>1</sup> Greek *White Book* (1917), given as authority in *War Encyclopedia* issued by the Committee on Public Information, U. S. Government, pp. 278 and 279.

Bulgarians in September, 1918, Germany had had substantially complete control, through its entire length, of the Berlin-Constantinople-Bagdad Railway, as well as control over all the territory in Europe and Asia, save that occupied by the Salonica Army, which she deemed essential for the accomplishment of her great plan, one cannot but appreciate the crushing effect which the Allied blow in the Balkans must have had on her purposes and hopes; nor can one fail to appreciate, also, her great strategical mistake in trying to end the war by an attack on the Western Front in the spring of 1918, without first disposing of the Salonica Army, and thereby making strong the strategical and vital center of the great theater of operations of the Central Powers.

## CHAPTER IX

### LUDENDORFF'S GREAT RETREAT

**N**O SOONER had the first break-through of the Hindenburg Line been made by the Americans on the Meuse-Argonne front than Ludendorff saw his great peril. At once he realized that unless this thrust could be stopped immediately, he must begin the withdrawal of his armies from Northern France and Belgium. Accordingly, he made every effort to stop it and was for a time partially successful. But in the meantime, other break-throughs along the Flanders' and intermediate fronts of the Hindenburg Line had occurred; and, moreover, he soon saw that the Americans were only temporarily checked in the Argonne. Under these circumstances, there was but one thing for him to do; and that was to withdraw his armies from Northern France and Belgium to the line of the Meuse River. Accordingly, at the beginning of October he gave the order for

a retreat which he had foreseen might be necessary and for which he had provided previously.<sup>1</sup>

A very difficult problem confronted Ludendorff. It was much the same kind of problem that he had had to face when Foch broke through the west side of the Château-Thierry salient, except that it was on a much larger scale. Then, only the portion of his army in the Château-Thierry salient had been endangered, but in this instance the whole of his army north of Verdun was threatened with destruction. Not only this, but the great Allied victories which in the meantime had been won in Palestine and the Balkans added to Ludendorff's situation a still greater peril.

With Bulgaria out of the war; with Turkey virtually out; with Austria certain to withdraw from it as soon as her army on the Piave should again be vigorously attacked; with Germany already asking for an armistice; with Foch delivering daily, anvil blows against the only

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<sup>1</sup> "The Germans had foreseen and provided for a retreat on a large scale in Belgium and the north of France and had started to operate that retreat at the beginning of October." — General Malleterre, in "How the War Was Won," *Harper's Magazine*, April, 1919, p. 608.

army of any consequence left to Germany; with—in short—all the Central Powers in a state of collapse and disintegration, and nothing to stand between Germany and the onrushing victorious armies of the Allies but the German Army, which though in retreat, was still unconquered, Ludendorff had before him one of the most difficult military problems to solve in all history. What could he do? What should he do? What, from a German point of view, was it best for him to do?

Strategically, had it not been for the collapse of the German nation in his rear, the thing for Ludendorff to have done, the moment he saw that it would be impossible for him to hold the Hindenburg Line, would have been to withdraw to the line of the Meuse as quickly as possible<sup>1</sup> without allowing his retreat to degenerate into a rout. Because, once safely there, the river would not only stop the tanks, then a most im-

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<sup>1</sup> "One thing only," says Marshal Foch, "could have delayed defeat for them. That was to get all their forces from everywhere back behind the Meuse. That would have been a formidable position. If they had done that—well, we might have been there yet. But they couldn't do it. Why? Because it would have been an open confession of defeat, and they dared not face the moral effect of that at home."—*Literary Digest*, June 7, 1919, p. 66.



portant offensive weapon in the hands of the Allies, but would form with the Ardennes Mountains, through which the river cleaves its way, an exceptionally strong defensive position, whose length was less by one hundred miles than that of the Hindenburg Line from Verdun to the English Channel.

In this connection it should not pass unnoticed that the broad-nosed salient, whose lines run through Liege, Namur, Dinant, Mézières, and Sedan, which the Germans would have occupied had they fallen back to the Meuse River line, had not the vulnerability to an enemy's attacks characteristic of most salients, for the reason that no important lines of railway pass through or from it into Germany. Then, too, this salient presented the greatest irregularities of surface, being "intersected by numerous ravines and streams with steep and rocky banks, by deep valleys, and by ridges of hills,"<sup>1</sup> which make it a great natural fortification that would have been very easy to defend.

But to make a quick retirement to the line of the Meuse, even though the German rear had

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<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, ninth edition, vol. III, p. 513.

not been in collapse, would have been an exceedingly risky operation, for the reason that it would have been interpreted by the German people, as well as by the Allies, as an open confession of defeat; and might have had a demoralizing effect upon the German Army, which would have led to a great German disaster. And had the great bulk of the German Army learned, in the course of such a hasty retirement, what they did not then know, that their whole rear was in a state of collapse, there would have been a great probability of this very thing happening. Then, too, a speedier withdrawal would have necessitated abandoning to the enemy greater quantities of supplies, equipments, and guns.

It was apparent that if the armistice could be agreed to while the German Army was still unbeaten and on foreign soil, it would lessen for the German people the bitterness of defeat, prevent an Allied invasion and devastation of German territory, and probably result in Germany's receiving better terms in the treaty of peace. But these were the only objects for continuing the struggle, since it was evident that

the conditions in Germany at that time utterly destroyed all hope of final success. Knowing that Germany was beaten and that the end was near, Ludendorff was nevertheless anxious, of course, to maintain the courage and *morale* of his army to the last, and to retain in his possession upon the signing of the armistice as much of the territory of France and Belgium as possible.

Accordingly, he made his plan for a deliberate retreat. His purpose was to contest every position; to make the Allies fight for every foot of ground gained; and to fall back only when he was forced to, or when he found it absolutely necessary to prevent the cutting of his communications and capture of parts of his army.

From October 4 until his resignation on October 26 Ludendorff followed this plan. During the withdrawal he brought every possible force to bear against the Americans and French advancing from the Meuse-Argonne front on Sedan and Mézières, in order to hold open the line of railway from Hirson through these towns to Metz, so as to facilitate the retirement of the Germans and give them more time to

withdraw their troops and supplies, especially from the Laon salient.<sup>1</sup>

But, although he was able to retard greatly their progress, he could not stop them. They had seen the importance of closing the gap and of seizing the railway, and in the face of forty German divisions which Ludendorff had ordered there to oppose them, as well as in the face of the most discouraging conditions, they continued slowly but surely to press forward to their goal.<sup>2</sup> The British, French, and Bel-

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<sup>1</sup> In these operations Field Marshal Hindenburg was the chief of the General Staff of the German armies and as such was the ostensible commander-in-chief; but the real commander was General Ludendorff, "the brains of Germany's war-making power," who was acting as Hindenburg's Chief of Staff under the title of First Quartermaster-General. He it was who worked out the plans and directed the operations. Between the time of his resignation on October 26 and the signing of the armistice on November 11, Hindenburg made no change in Ludendorff's plan.

<sup>2</sup> General Pershing, in his report of these operations to the Secretary of War, says: "In all 40 enemy divisions had been used against us in the Meuse-Argonne battle. Between September 26 and November 6 we took 26,059 prisoners and 468 guns on this front. Our divisions engaged were the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Twenty-sixth, Twenty-eighth, Twenty-ninth, Thirty-second, Thirty-third, Thirty-fifth, Thirty-seventh, Forty-second, Seventy-seventh, Seventy-eighth, Seventy-ninth, Eightieth, Eighty-second, Eighty-ninth, Ninetieth, and Ninety-first. Many of our divisions remained in line for a length of time that required nerves of steel, while others were sent in again after only a few days of rest. The First, Fifth, Twenty-sixth, Forty-second, Seventy-seventh, Eightieth, Eighty-ninth, and Ninetieth were in line twice. Although some

gians along other portions of the line, imbued also with the same spirit of victory, gradually, but no less surely, forced back the Germans in their front.

But their progress was very slow; for Ludendorff conducted this difficult operation<sup>1</sup> with great skill. His retirement was methodical. There was no rout, no *débâcle*. Up to the very last the discipline and *morale* of the German troops were good, and their rear guards fought bravely, fiercely, desperately to hold back the onrushing Allies.<sup>2</sup>

It is not the purpose here to describe in detail this great retreat. It will suffice to say that, taking advantage of every known means to de-

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of the divisions were fighting their first battle, they soon became equal to the best."

The American combat division numbered about 28,000 officers and men; the German, about 12,000; the French, about 12,000; and the British, about 15,000.

<sup>1</sup> "A retreat, on the confession of the greatest soldiers, is the most difficult task which a general can be called upon to undertake."—Buchan, in *Nelson's History of the War*, vol. XII, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> "The resistance of the German rear guard had been stubborn, and had certainly made the victorious advance of the Allied armies slow. But the retreat although methodical and admirably arranged by Ludendorff, had not been able to free the armies completely and remove the immense material accumulated between the sea and the Ardennes."—General Malleterre, in "How the War Was Won," *Harper's Magazine*, April, 1919, p. 609.

lay the advance of the Allied armies, Ludendorff made it extremely difficult for them to push forward; so difficult, indeed, that although they made what seemed to be almost superhuman efforts to drive back the German Army, they succeeded in forcing it back during the last six weeks of almost continuous fighting only a distance of some forty miles behind the Hindenburg Line.

By November 1, the Germans had retired from the Belgian coast; the British and Canadians had captured Valenciennes and were pushing forward between the Sambre and Scheldt on Mons; the Americans had forced their way northward to Bayonville, Aincreville, and Doullon, about twenty miles south of Sedan; and the French on their left had reached Vouziers about twenty-five miles south of Mézières. By November 11, when the armistice was signed, the dividing line separating the Allies from the Germans southward from Holland to a point opposite Metz ran, approximately, from the mouth of the Scheldt, about twelve miles northwest of Antwerp, up the left bank of that river to Ghent, thence through

Mons past Hirson, through Mézières, past the southern outskirts of Sedan, and thence along the left bank of the Meuse to a point opposite Mouzay, where it crossed the river, and thence through the northern edge of the Woëvre Forest to Bezonvaux, thence to Vandières, and thence across the Moselle to Port-sur-Seille opposite Metz.

Examining this line, we note that when the end came the Germans were occupying a line through Belgium, which lay approximately forty miles east of the Hindenburg Line, thirty miles west of the Meuse River line opposite Namur, and one hundred miles west of the German frontier; and that the Americans and French had closed the gap between the Verdun-Reims front and the Ardennes Mountains, but that the gap northward of these mountains to the Dutch frontier was open and was completely covered by the German Army, which extended from the mouth of the Scheldt through Ghent and Mons to the northern outskirts of Mézières. It will be noticed that the great Maubeuge-Charleroi-Namur-Liege-Aix-la-Chapelle Railway, which passes directly through the gap into

Germany, crossed the German line at right angles to it and was completely covered by it; and that the flanks of the German Army occupying the line were protected on the right by Holland and on the left by the Meuse River and Ardennes Mountains from Mézières to Sedan.

Thus we see that the great length of time required by the Americans and French to close the gap south of the Ardennes Mountains, brought about by Ludendorff's desperate and terrific fighting to keep it open, had enabled him to withdraw that portion of his army facing the British and the Belgians along the Hindenburg Line eastward through Belgium to a position where it completely covered its line of communications back into Germany and where its flanks rested on practically impassable obstacles.

Nevertheless, the closing of the gap from Verdun to Sedan would have made it absolutely necessary for him to continue his retreat to the Meuse River line even had the armistice not been signed; for the reason that with such an extended front and only one line of railway behind him he was still in a dangerous position.



Then, too, the Meuse line was much stronger and much shorter; and would form a water barrier between his army and the enemy's tanks.

Had it been possible to close this gap earlier, say before the German Army along the Hindenburg Line from the vicinity of St. Quentin northward to the English Channel had retired so far eastward, the strategical effect in all likelihood would have been much greater; since, in that case, an Allied thrust northward from Mézières probably would have resulted in cutting the Charleroi-Namur-Liege-Aix-la-Chapelle Railway behind the German Army and have forced a large part of that army to surrender.

But, whatever might have been the outcome under such conditions, the point I wish to emphasize is that at the time the armistice was signed the German Army was in an excellent position from Mézières northward for completing its withdrawal to the line of the Meuse without any great disaster; and once there it would have been in a very strong and most favorable position for making a determined stand. It is, therefore, my opinion that had the armistice

not been signed when it was, no great *débâcle* would have overtaken the German Army in the next few weeks or months as a result of the strategical situation on the Western Front.<sup>1</sup>

There can be no question that Germany never would have signed an armistice before the defeat of her great army on the Western Front, had not the break in the Balkans exposed her to an attack from the south, threatened the communications of her great army, and cut off a large part of her remaining sources of supply.

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<sup>1</sup> Confirmatory of the views herein expressed, attention is invited to the following extract from the *Literary Digest* of June 7, 1919, p. 67, of a reported interview between an English newspaper correspondent of the London *Daily Mail* and Marshal Foch bearing directly on this point. The *Literary Digest* says: "In reply to the question, 'Would you not have captured large masses of the enemy if the Germans had not given in when they did?' the Marshal forever laid the ghost of the wide-spread report that the signing of the armistice deprived him of a great opportunity to force a German *débâcle*. According to this interview:

"The Marshal took up his pencil again and sketched a rough chart of the battle line.

" 'When you are advancing on the whole of a 250-mile front, as we were,' he said, 'great encircling movements are impossible. As your adversary falls back he blows up bridges here, here, and here. He blocks this road, and this, and this. He covers every track and line of pursuit with the litter of the material he abandons. The advance of the pursuing army becomes more and more difficult. You cannot get on fast enough to catch him. At the cost of great sacrifice of material he gets away. That is what modern war is like. *Ce n'est pas élégant, mais c'est comme ça*. (It's not elegant, but it's like that.)' "

Nor would she have yielded until her great army had been either annihilated, captured, or driven across the Rhine. But would it have been possible for the Allied armies to do this? Let us see.

I have already pointed out the great defensive strength of the line of the Meuse. But back of it are the Moselle River and Metz with its great system of fortifications, and back of them is the line of the Saar; then come the fortress of Strassburg and the great river Rhine; and on the east bank of the Rhine, extending from Switzerland almost to Karlsruhe, are the Black Forest Mountains, which, from the days of Caesar, have been considered a most difficult obstruction for armies attempting to move through them from west to east. These are all strong defensive positions; but the Rhine and Black Forest Mountains are more than that; they are formidable obstacles, and would be impassable if defended by adequate military forces armed with modern weapons.

“Of all the operations of war,” says Jomini, “there is none more arduous and difficult than the passage of a large river in the face of an

enemy." When it is remembered that the passage, or attempted passage, of the Rhine in this case would have been in the face of a nation in arms, and not in the face of an enemy few in numbers, as were the armies in Jomini's and Napoleon's day; when it is remembered that the bridges of the Rhine were strongly protected by bridgeheads and field works, and that two railways paralleling the river, and many others near the German frontier, had been constructed solely with reference to battle lines, permitting quick concentration of troops upon any front of the Rhine or German frontier; and that the defensive positions, forts, and great fortresses along and near the German frontier had for more than forty years preceding the war been strengthened in every possible way to prevent an invasion of German territory, one is appalled by the magnitude of the task and cannot but feel that its accomplishment would have been an impossibility—a task beyond human power. In view of these facts, it is submitted that there would have been no chance of the Allies winning the war on the Western Front, had there been no collapse of the German

rear as a result of the Allied victory in the Balkans.

But even supposing, for the sake of the argument, that the war might have been won on the Western Front in the following year, after approximately four million American soldiers had been sent there, as was the plan of the War Department,<sup>1</sup> would it not have been only after an appalling and unnecessary sacrifice of life,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "An American army of 4,000,000 men in France, working in conjunction with our Allies and under one commander-in-chief will enable us to go through the German line wherever we please."—General Peyton C. March, Chief of Staff U. S. Army, to Senate Military Committee as reported in *Washington Times* of August 15, 1918.

"After a study of the entire situation, including as accurate estimate of the potential strength of our Allies on the Western Front and of the probable German strength as possible, I came to the conclusion that the war might be brought to an end in 1919, provided we were able to land in France by June 30 of that year eighty American divisions of a strength of 3,360,000."—General March, in Report to Secretary of War.

"The President has finally announced that the American military policy from this time on is centered on the Western Front, and he has declined to be diverted from that one thing. The War Department has now adopted this as a policy, and it is the policy of the United States that the military program is to be centered in France."—*Washington Times*, Aug. 15, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> The battle casualties of the American Expeditionary Forces as reported by War Department on September 26, 1919, were:

Killed in action.....	35,590
Died of wounds received in action.....	14,747
Wounded in action.....	205,696
Taken prisoner .....	4,480

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Total.....260,513

since a few thousand soldiers sent into the Balkans would, as the sequel has shown, have been a deciding factor in bringing the war to a close?

It is not the purpose in this concluding chapter to carry further the discussion of this interesting question, except to say that it is the deliberate opinion of the writer that, had there been no break in the Balkans and had the campaign continued during the spring and summer of 1919, two hundred thousand Americans sent to the Balkans would have had a much greater effect in bringing the war to a speedy end than ten times that number sent to the Western Front.<sup>1</sup>

Of the 205,696 soldiers "wounded in action" 113,458 were invalided home. Just what percentage of these have already died as a result of their wounds, many of which were very severe, has not yet been determined, but undoubtedly a large number, which would increase greatly the number of battle deaths.

In order to appreciate more fully the enormous sacrifice of life which these figures involve attention is invited to the fact that the total battle casualties of the Union soldiers during the four years of our great Civil War as given by Captain Frederick Phisterer, U. S. Army, in his *Statistical Record* of the armies of the United States, page 70, were: 93,443, of whom 44,238 were killed in battle and 49,205 died of wounds and injuries.

<sup>1</sup> It will no doubt be of interest to the reader to know that the views set forth herein that the war never could have been

For three and a half years prior to the great German thrust of March 21, 1918, the opposing armies on the Western Front had remained practically stationary in their intrenched positions. Although the most strenuous efforts, involving enormous losses of life, were made by both sides, neither side was able to break through the intrenched lines of the other and resume a war of movement. Indeed, with the exception of the small amount of territory yielded to the Allies as a result of what was known as "The Hindenburg rectification of

won by the Allies solely on the Western Front have not been formed after the events, but have long been held by the writer; and that in several memoranda to the War Department, months before the armistice was signed, he set forth in detail these views and strongly urged the sending of American troops into the Balkans. He was at that time and still is of the opinion that had we adopted this plan right at the start and carried it out with anything like the vigor with which our troops were afterwards sent to France, Russia would have been saved to the Allied cause and the war been brought to an end much sooner and with much less loss of life. There were several reasons why this was not done, but this matter cannot be discussed now, owing to the fact that the Secretary of War has directed, "that no cablegrams or other such confidential information shall be published, neither verbatim nor in substance, until made public by the War Department or by the Congress of the United States."

For the information of the reader who may be further interested in this matter there will be found in Appendix A to this book a copy of the writer's Fourth Memorandum to the War Department advocating this plan. This memorandum was submitted on August 26, 1918; and with the exception of a certain confidential cablegram quoted therein, which the War

the German line," practically no territory had been gained by either side during these three and a half years of terrific fighting.

Then there came, as we have seen, the great thrusts of the Germans beginning with that of March 21, in which with the aid of poisonous gases they succeeded in breaking through the Allied lines; and a few months later the great counter-offensive of Foch, beginning with that of July 18, 1918, and followed by the great attacks on the Hindenburg Line, in which with the help of the tanks the Allies succeeded in breaking through the German lines. But in

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Department would not grant the writer permission to publish, is given in full as written, although this has necessitated some repetition of matter contained in the text of the book.

However, since the above was written, Captain Gordon Gordon-Smith of the Royal Serbian Army has written an article for the October, 1919, issue of the *Current History Magazine*, entitled, "Why the Salonica Army Was Powerless," in which he points out in detail the principal reasons why active operations were not sooner undertaken in the Balkans, the sum and substance of which is that Great Britain opposed an active offensive there. When taken in connection with the fact that our own President, Secretary of War, and Chiefs of Staff had practically from the start—probably in large measure as a result of Great Britain's opposition to an active campaign in the Balkans—adopted the plan that the war was to be won by confining our efforts solely to the Western Front, we appreciate still more fully why it was that Great Britain's stand on this question was not sooner overruled and an earlier effort made by the Allies to strike a telling blow at the vital center of the theater of operations of the Central Powers. See Captain Gordon-Smith's article, Appendix B.



neither case were these break-throughs any more than temporary; in neither case was either side able to bring about a complete war of movement; for no sooner had one side broken through the lines than the adversary at once fell back to other lines, and there again stood on the defensive. In passing from one position to another there was, of course, war of movement; but on the whole the character of the war was not greatly changed, since it still continued to be in great part a war of positions. In short, from trench warfare, or war of position, it had been developed by the gas and tank attacks into war of movement only between positions.

In fact, neither side, during more than four years of the most terrible fighting the world ever has known, had been able, after breaking through the enemy's lines, to advance more than a few miles. The greatest advance made by the Germans was thirty-five miles; and it took the Allies six weeks after breaking through the Hindenburg Line to force the Germans back a distance of forty miles. Virtually, the campaign on the Western Front, from the beginning

to the end, was a military stalemate; and had it not been for the temporary advantage gained on one side or the other by the use of gas or tank attacks would have remained during its more than four years' duration purely a war of positions.

The principal reason why neither side on the Western Front during this long interval of time had been able to bring about a war of movement, was because the flanks of the opposing armies were both secured by impassable obstacles. With one flank resting on Switzerland and the other on the English Channel, no opportunity was offered either army to turn the flank of the other and strike at the main line of its communications, which is equivalent to saying that no opportunity was offered either army for extended strategical maneuvers or combinations. It must be evident to anyone that, had the opposing armies on the Western Front not had their flanks protected, one or the other would have been turned out of position and one or the other been decisively defeated long before four years had elapsed. But, protected as they were, each had to limit its operations to

frontal attacks against the intrenched lines of the other; and frontal attacks against intrenched lines are most destructive of human life.

Here we have the chief reason why this war continued so long and why it was the most sanguinary in all history. The question naturally arises: Could it not have been won by the Allies in a shorter period, and with less loss of life? Undoubtedly it could have been, had the Allies, during the first three years of the war, not made blunder after blunder.

From the beginning the vital and strategical center of the whole theater of war lay between the Black and Aegean seas, in the vicinity of Constantinople. The Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmora, the Bosphorus, the Balkans from Salonica to Constantinople, these were the vital points, and if the Allies could have won an early victory in this region, the first important step towards winning the war would have been accomplished.

Strategically, the British attack upon the Dardanelles, which was favored by Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, was

the right thing to do. But the operation was very badly managed. The authorities seemed to think that with little or no assistance from land forces they could capture the forts of the Dardanelles by a powerful naval attack; whereas had they made the original effort with a considerable army, assisted by the navy; or had there been a sufficient army ready to land at the proper moment, the campaign very probably would have succeeded. Granville Fortescue in his book entitled, *What of the Dardanelles?* says:

I wish to bring out vividly the fact that a landing in force, undertaken at the time indicated, would have changed the whole story of the Gallipoli campaign. . . .

Why was no land attack planned in conjunction with the naval assault on the Dardanelles? Did the originator of the action believe that the fleet alone could force the passage and capture the land forts by the same maneuver? . . . . The whole question of the naval fight will be dealt with later. Here we are concerned with the grave error of omitting land operations at a time when in all probability they would have brought partial if not complete success. . . .

After a careful and serious study of the course of events in the Dardanelles, in my opinion the fact that the Allied fleets have not passed into the Sea of Marmora is primarily due to the initial blunder of challenging the passage of the Hellespont with ships alone.

Or had the Allies subsequently landed their armies at the head of the Gulf of Saros, just north of the Dardanelles, or on the coast of the Trojan plain in the vicinity of the island of Tenedos just south of the strait, instead of landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula, the campaign very probably would have succeeded and the war have been brought to an end at least two years sooner. "Today I believe we are in a position to assert," says General Malleterre, "that if the expedition of the Dardanelles had succeeded in 1915, and if we had taken Constantinople, Russia would have remained a strong military factor, and the war doubtless would have finished two years ago."<sup>1</sup>

Other splendid opportunities, too, were offered the Allies for a master stroke in this vital center of the theater of war, especially during

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<sup>1</sup> General Malleterre, in "How the War Was Won," *Harper's Magazine*, April, 1919, p. 610.

the first three years of the struggle when the Allies had a preponderating force on the Western Front, but one more example will suffice.

Had Roumania, when she came into the war in 1916, received proper assistance from the Allies and not been left practically single-handed to face the armies of Mackensen and Falkenhayn, she would probably have been victorious, or at least would not have been crushed; in which case Russia could have obtained ammunition and guns from the Allies and in all probability would have been saved to the Allied cause.

Strategically, the importance of saving Russia to the Allied cause cannot be overestimated; for she had the wheat which the Allies needed and the Allies had the ammunition and guns which she needed. She had the man power also, one of the supreme essentials for winning the war, for the lack of which the Allies came to the verge of final defeat and were saved in the end only by the man power of America. Then, too, in addition to saving Russia, a Roumanian victory would have brought enormous numbers of Jugo-Slavs into the war on the side of the Allies, cut in two the great

theater of operations of the Central Powers, and put an end to Germany's great scheme of world dominion.

*To strike at the communications of the enemy without exposing your own to his attack*, was the one strategical principle, the carrying out of which had more to do with winning the war than any other. And it is a remarkable fact that until Foch was made commander-in-chief scarcely any effort whatsoever, and no successful effort, to carry out this great principle of war was made by the Allies in any theater of operations.

It was the carrying out of this principle which enabled General Foch to win the Château-Thierry salient at the beginning of his great offensive on the Western Front; which enabled the British Army commanders to drive the Germans from the Amiens salient and force them back to the Hindenburg Line; which enabled General Pershing to obliterate in two days the dangerous St. Mihiel salient that for many months had menaced French communications. It was the carrying out of this principle by the Americans and French in their great thrust

from the Verdun-Reims front through the Argonne Forest to Sedan and Mézières that put the German Army in a precarious situation and forced its retreat through Belgium towards the Meuse River line. It was the carrying out of this principle by General Allenby in Palestine that enabled him to annihilate the Turkish Army in his front and force the Turkish Government to sue for peace. And it was the carrying out of this principle in the Balkans by General d'Espérey, which not only forced Bulgaria out of the war, but at the same time cut or threatened the communications of the other armies of the Central Powers, and which, taken in connection with the persistent pounding of the Germans by Marshal Foch on the Western Front, brought the great war to an end.



## APPENDIX A

### *Fourth Memorandum on the Strategy of the War*

By Lieutenant-Colonel H. H. Sargent, U. S. Army, Army War College, August 26, 1918

1. In the closing paragraphs of my third memorandum on the strategy of the war which was finished on June 5, 1918, and submitted to the Director of War Plans Division of the General Staff a few days afterwards, I said:

“In closing this brief discussion and analysis of the plans here suggested, I should like to add that nothing herein should be considered as in the slightest way critical of, or unfavorable to, continuing the present plan of rushing troops to France to stop the Germans on the Western Front, which is now being prosecuted with so much vigor by the military authorities; for it must be evident to anyone that this is now an absolute necessity to save the situation. Moreover, having committed ourselves with our Allies, to this plan, we must keep inviolate our faith with them.

“But, if we continue in this war to raise, organize, and train millions of soldiers, and continue to send them across the sea until the war is won, as now

seems to be the policy and purpose of the whole nation, the time will come when we will have enough troops on the Western Front to make it absolutely safe; and then we shall want to find another front upon which, with reasonable hopes of final victory, we can bring to bear the power of our naval and military forces. And when that time comes, I feel that our Allies will also be ready to give careful consideration to other plans; and very probably look with favor upon one of the plans herein outlined, if it receive the sanction and advocacy of our own Government, as I hope it may."

And in connection with the above, I would like to invite attention to the following cablegram from . . . to the Adjutant-General U. S. Army, dated July 9, 1918:

The cablegram is omitted in order to comply with the following endorsement on a request of mine of the War Department to publish this Memorandum:

"War Department, A. G. O., April 10, 1919.—  
To Lt.-Col. H. H. Sargent, U. S. A. Retired,  
Jacksonville, Oregon."

"The publication of the enclosed article entitled 'Fourth Memorandum on the Strategy of the War,' is permitted with the omission of cablegram on page 2.

"By order of Secretary of War.

"(Signed) J. C. ASHBURN,

"Adjutant-General."

2. From a further study of the strategical situation in the whole theater of war I am more firmly

convinced than ever that "the line of least resistance to decisive Allied victory is through the Balkan way," and has been from the beginning. And since we now have, or will shortly have, sufficient troops on the Western Front, along with the troops of our Allies there, to iron out the German salients, and drive the Germans back to their original line, the line of the Aisne, and hold them there, it seems to me the time has come to think seriously of sending an American army to Salonica, either by sea or through France and Italy or both. It seems to me that if a million, or even a half-million, American soldiers could be put into the Balkans this winter to join with the half-million or more Allied troops now there, great results would be sure to follow. Turkey is wavering now, and so is Bulgaria. Both have tied themselves up to Germany and Austria, expecting these powers to win; but the very moment they feel assured that the Central Powers are going to lose, they will desert them without scruple; for it was not through principle, but solely in the hope of their own aggrandizement, that they allied themselves with Germany and Austria.

3. Once a large American army should join the Allies at Salonica and begin operations, not only would Turkey and Bulgaria probably make terms and withdraw from the war, but hundreds of thousands of Jugo-Slavs would flock to the Allied standards, to say nothing of the many thousands of Roumanians who would join the Allied ranks also, since they still have no love for their old enemies, Ger-

many and Austria. And Austria herself is in such desperate straits economically and has become so tired of war, that one big Allied victory on her soil would probably make her come to terms. Germany is most vulnerable through her back door, through Austria, and although she can never be driven across the Rhine by making the great Allied effort solely along that front, yet should the Allied Army advance victoriously through Austria, it would necessitate Germany's detaching many troops from the Western Front to meet the threatened invasion from the south, whereupon the Allies might be able to break through the weakened Western Front, cross the Rhine, and invade Germany from the west.

4. The only hope of winning the war as it should be won is to annihilate or capture in battle Germany's armies; and this cannot be done on the Western Front. To do it, the Allies must invade her territory and bring the war home to her people; bring her to battle where they can reach not only her armies, but the very resources that maintain her armies; where they can destroy her railroads and canals, cut off her supplies, blow up her munition plants, and lay waste her fields.

#### THE SALONICA PLAN

5. The Salonica front is one of capital importance and a successful offensive there would have immense and far-reaching results.

6. It would cut in two the theater of operations of the Central Powers and destroy at once Germany's

idea of dominion from the Baltic Sea to the Persian Gulf.

7. It would cut the Berlin-Constantinople-Bagdad Railway and thus deprive Germany of the great quantities of food and raw materials which she is now obtaining from Asia Minor over this road, and also prevent her sending to Turkey immense quantities of munitions, without which the resistance of the Turkish Army before the British Army near Bagdad in Mesopotamia, and the Turkish Army before the British Army in Palestine near Jerusalem, would probably collapse.

8. Deprived of their munitions, the Turks would be forced to retreat before the British, and in the end be compelled to sue for peace, which would open the Dardanelles and Black Sea to British warships and set free a large part of the British forces now in Mesopotamia and Palestine for use elsewhere.

9. Once Bulgaria and Turkey were disposed of, the Allied Army of Salonica could reoccupy Serbia, move on the Danube from Belgrade and threaten Budapest, the Hungarian capital. Such success as this would result in reestablishing Serbia and would greatly encourage and hearten the Serbian race.

In passing, it may well be remarked that the Serbians make fine soldiers. They are very brave and have great skill in mountain warfare. These qualities, and their knowledge of the country, enable them to win battles in the face of superior numbers and under great difficulties. Their recent successful campaign against the Bulgarians, in which they forced

them out of several mountain strongholds and finally captured the intrenched Bulgarian position on Mount Vetrenik, called by them the "Rock of Blood," is but one of many examples illustrative of their great skill in mountain warfare.

10. And in a discussion of the advantages of this plan, it should not be overlooked that if the Allied Army operated as here outlined, its line of communication from Belgrade and the Danube back through Serbia to its base of operations at Salonica would be entirely in friendly territory; that the country northward from Belgrade, the Serbian capital, to Budapest is an immense plain lying in the valley of the Danube, with direct river and railway communication between the two cities and no fortresses of importance about the Hungarian capital; and that Vienna, the Austrian capital, is only one hundred and fifty miles from Budapest, with good river and railway communication between them and no intervening mountains.

And here it may well be noted that, strategically, a successful campaign upon Budapest would so threaten the Austrian capital and the communications of the Austrian Army in Italy as to compel that army to fall back upon Vienna; whereupon the Italian Army on the Piave could push forward and invade Austria.

In this connection it is worthy of notice, that Napoleon's march down the Danube in 1805 and seizure of the Austrian capital, after capturing an Austrian Army under General Mack at Ulm, paralyzed

the operations of the Austrian Army under the Archduke Charles in Italy and caused him to fall back before Masséna upon Vienna; and that Napoleon's great victory over the Austrian and Russian armies at Austerlitz a few days later, not only resulted in the reconquering of Italy, but compelled both Austria and Russia to sue for peace.

11. One of the arguments against a campaign from the Salonica front is the difficulties of communication; but the Balkan Railway system is of no inconsiderable extent. The Berlin-Constantinople Railway passes right through Serbia, Bulgaria, and European Turkey. A railway also runs northwest from Salonica to Monastir; another runs north from Salonica *via* Uskub to Nish, one of the principal stations of the Berlin-Constantinople Railway; another from Salonica passes eastward along the littoral of the Aegean Sea until it joins the Berlin-Constantinople Railway, about thirty miles south of Adrianople; and still another from Uskub runs in a northeasterly direction to Sofia, the Bulgarian capital, where it crosses the Berlin-Constantinople Railway and thence runs east through Bulgaria to Varna on the Black Sea. And it should also be noted that since the beginning of the war, many miles of wagon roads and light railways have been built by the soldiers and the Macedonian peasants, and many of the old wagon roads and railways been repaired and improved. Mountains on which only a few years ago only sheep trails existed are now accessible to heavy guns.

12. Another argument against a campaign from

the Salonica front is the difficulties arising from the mountainous nature of the country. But these difficulties have been greatly exaggerated. The mountains do not offer insuperable obstacles to military operations. History proves this; for probably in no country has there been so much fighting as in the Balkans. And even in recent years, under modern conditions of warfare, campaign after campaign has been won and lost in this theater of operations. The mountainous nature of the country did not prevent the Balkan League from inflicting a crushing defeat on Turkey in the first Balkan War in 1912; neither did it prevent the Serbians, Greeks, Turks, and Roumanians from decisively defeating the Bulgarian Army in the second Balkan War in 1913; nor did it prevent the Austrians and Bulgarians from driving the Serbian Army out of Serbia into Albania in 1915, nor prevent the Allied Army of Salonica from forcing the Bulgarians and Austrians out of their intrenched mountain strongholds in 1916 and capturing Monastir.

13. The advantages of Salonica for a base of operations lie principally in the fact that the port of Salonica is one of the finest in the world; it is a "land-locked harbor miles in extent, in which the navies of the world could lie at anchor." And although there are some submarines in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean, nevertheless the sea route to Salonica is kept open by the British and Italian and French navies for the transportation of troops and supplies.



14. The importance of the city and bay of Salonica to the Allies cannot be overestimated; for if by any chance the Central Powers should gain possession of them, it would be a catastrophe. Once in possession of them, Germany would follow with the invasion of Greece, and no doubt establish in Salonica Bay a submarine base of the most formidable kind; and most probably subsidiary bases in the indented and rocky coast of Greece, or among the hundreds of islands forming the Archipelago. From these bases hundreds of submarines would destroy the ships of the Allies entering the east Mediterranean and Aegean seas, and most probably stop the greater part of the traffic by the Suez Canal. This would cut off the direct communication of Great Britain with India and deprive the British Army in Egypt from obtaining supplies and munitions. It is therefore of supreme importance not only that the Allies maintain a strong army at Salonica, but that it be strongly reinforced as early as possible for an energetic offensive in that theater of operations.

15. There are four ways by which troops could be sent to the Balkans, all of which might simultaneously be made use of, if it were deemed advisable.

First, by sending them across the Atlantic and through the Mediterranean and Aegean seas.

Second, by sending them from Marseille, France, through the Mediterranean and Aegean seas.

Third, by sending them through France and Italy across the Ionian Sea to Patras, Corinth, and

other Greek ports, and thence over the Greek railways to Salonica.

Fourth, by sending them through France and Italy across the Adriatic to Avlona or Santi Quaranta or both, from which places paved highways lead to the rear of the Salonica front. Transports could be sent in a few hours at night from southern Italian ports to these ports and thus avoid the danger of being sunk by submarines.

16. In connection with landing troops at Avlona and Santi Quaranta, which are now held by the Allies, it may be pointed out that it would be no unaccomplishable task for the Italian and French navies to sweep the Adriatic and its Austrian harbors clear of submarines, torpedo boats, and mines, preparatory to a future landing on the Dalmatian or Istrian coast; and especially so, since the Austrian fleet has, as a result of the daring exploits of Pellegrini, Rizzo, and Aenizo of the Italian Navy, already lost two of its most powerful battleships and been forced to take shelter in an Austrian harbor.

17. Even a small force landed in Dalmatia, somewhere between the Gulf of Cattaro and the Naronta River and moved thence into the interior *via* the Castelnuovo-Ragusa-Serajero-Nish Railway against the roads and railways leading from the Salonica front back to Belgrade, would, if made when the Austrians and Bulgarians were strongly pressed in front, almost certainly compel their retreat.

18. And in this connection it will not be out of

place to remark that should the Allies be successful in pushing forward to Belgrade and beyond into Austrian territory, they would threaten the communications of Fiume with Trieste and Vienna and be in position to take in rear the defenses of that gulf, while the Allied warships attacked them in front, whereupon that fine harbor could be utilized for a new base for future operations in Austria and Germany.

REASONS WHY THE WAR CANNOT BE WON ON THE  
WESTERN FRONT

19. Since the plan of attacking in the Balkans, outlined herein and in previous memoranda, is based upon the supposition that the war cannot be won by confining our efforts solely to the Western and Italian fronts, I desire to give some of my reasons for so believing.

20. For more than four years the armies of the Allies and Germany have been facing each other along the lines of the Western Front; and although the most stupendous efforts have been made again and again, involving enormous losses of life, neither side has been able to break completely through and resume a war of movement; and the principal reason why this is so is that neither front can be turned. One flank resting on Switzerland and the other on the English Channel makes it impossible to turn the front of either army, and compels each army to confine its operations to attempting to break through the front of the other. But with strongly intrenched

lines—with, so to speak, zones of intrenchments—on each side, this has been found to be an impossible task, and it will most probably continue to be an impossible task. Time and time again during the first three and a half years of the war, prior to the great German offensive begun on March 21, one side or the other made attacks by first bringing an overwhelming artillery fire against a limited sector of the enemy's line and following it with great numbers of infantry trained in trench fighting; but at most no more than one or two of the intrenched lines could be captured; the other lines in rear held, and new intrenched lines in rear were constructed; and the situation was exactly as before, except that a few hundred yards were perhaps gained on one side and a great number of officers and men killed on both sides. As a result, neither side was any nearer victory, since both sides had been weakened relatively about the same amounts; and if one side had gained a few hundred yards and captured one or two lines of the enemy's intrenchments, it had probably lost in taking the offensive a greater number of officers and men than the other side, and would probably even lose the ground gained, should the other side plan and execute a similar attack against it.

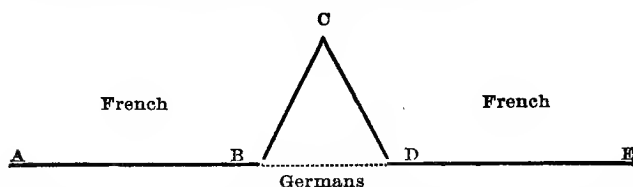
21. Then in March, 1918, the Germans made a great change in their methods of attacking. They abandoned the tactics of trying to pound themselves forward by a succession of small attacks, as they had attempted to do at Verdun, and as the English had done at the battle of the Somme; and, instead, as-

sembled their divisions in overwhelming force against a long sector of the enemy's line, and, gathering up all their implements and methods of destruction, moved forward on an extended front and struck the enemy's line with their utmost power. By adopting this means, and by selecting sectors of the enemy's line with few lines of intrenchments or few reserves in rear, or both, they succeeded in forcing back the enemy's line in three or four cases from ten to thirty or thirty-five miles, but in no case were they able to break completely through the line. And the reason was that in each case, as they moved forward through the enemy's intrenched lines and beyond they created a situation which made their own lines more and more vulnerable and harder and harder to defend. In other words, they created a salient.

#### DISCUSSION OF A SALIENT

22. A salient is vulnerable; its weak points strategically are the sectors on each side of it near its base; because an attack in force there by threatening the communications of the occupying troops, would, if successful, force their retreat.

Then, too, any advantage of a central position — of interior lines — that may be possessed by troops occupying a salient, is overbalanced by the advantage which the enemy has of interior lines within the angular fronts on each side of the salient. To illustrate: Let the line ABCDE represent the front between the two opposing armies. Now if on account



of their central position the troops occupying the salient BCD have an advantage of interior lines, it must be evident that such advantage is more than counterbalanced by the advantage of interior lines possessed by the opposing troops occupying the angles or counter-salients ABC and CDE.

But as a matter of fact, where a salient is small, or is well filled with troops, there is no strategical advantage for troops occupying it; on the contrary, there is a great strategical disadvantage, first, because they have a too-limited space to maneuver in; and secondly, because they are subject to a converging fire from the enemy occupying the counter-salients. Troops within a salient are not infrequently so situated that long-range guns from one or the other side of it can enfilade or take them in reverse.

Then, too, the numerous roads and railways within a salient, although absolutely necessary for the movement of men and supplies, are strategically a source of weakness to the occupying troops, principally because they can be fired upon from many angles and often be enfiladed throughout long stretches by the guns of the troops occupying the counter-salients or by the guns at the nose of the salient. And the na-

ture of the terrain, and direction and position of the roads within a salient, of course, influence greatly the strategical situation of the occupying troops, but these are special cases which would call for a special analysis.

Then, again, a salient is *per se* not only weak, but it weakens the whole front by greatly lengthening it, making it necessary, of course, to use many more troops to defend it. Thus the sides BC and CD would require more than twice the number of troops to defend them than would the base BD, which was the line of the original front. And of course when these salients are multiplied the strength of the front becomes much weakened since its length becomes proportionately greatly increased. But on the other hand, it should of course be borne in mind that the weakening is not confined to one side, since the front of the opposing army is correspondingly lengthened and likewise weakened.

23. Having pointed out the weakness of a salient to the troops occupying it, mention is made of the fact that the great attacks made by the Germans in March and subsequently, created three salients, known as the Amiens, Château-Thierry, and Ypres salients, which placed the Germans occupying them in precarious situations and gave to their adversaries an immense strategical advantage, which General (now Marshal) Foch has been taking full advantage of since he began his great counter-offensive against the Château-Thierry salient on July 18. And, mainly because of this advantage, the Allies have been, and

still are, forcing back the Germans towards their original position, generally known as the Hindenburg Line.

But it should be evident to anyone that when they are driven back to that line and the salients ironed out, much greater difficulties will be encountered in forcing the Germans still farther back; and if the Allies should be successful in forcing their way through the German line, much as the Germans were successful in their great attack towards Amiens in March, 1918, a salient would be created which would place their troops occupying it in a very vulnerable and precarious situation and give to the Germans a great strategical advantage.

#### THE WESTERN FRONT

24. Germany's Western Front is about four hundred and sixty miles in length and fortified throughout with line upon line of intrenchments. Or to quote the words of a German officer spoken to a correspondent of the *Saturday Evening Post* six months before the United States came into the war:

“ The line of the Western Front is a powerful unbroken fortress. The enemy has persistently been dashing himself to pieces against this fortress for many months. He accomplishes nothing. Here and there he overruns an out-work, a detail of the fortress; but he never breaks into the stronghold itself, and no matter how brilliant his work or how costly his venture he always finds himself confronted with the necessity of starting his task all over again. . . .



“ The enemy will never break through the Western Front. This front is impregnable. It is defended by twenty-four complete lines of intrenchments and field works. The reduction of each one of these lines means an exhaustive campaign in itself—twenty-four blood-drenched campaigns before the line of the Rhine is reached. And, first, at the Rhine the real work of defeating Germany must begin. Meantime we shall have a number of years in which to continue strengthening, improving, and multiplying the Rhine defenses. To win in the west it must cost our enemy his last man and his last shell.”

25. Let us now consider for a moment the strong natural defensive positions of this theater of war. First, there is the line of the Aisne, or the Hindenburg Line; and back of it the line of the Meuse; and back of it the Moselle River and the fortification of Metz; and then come the great river Rhine and the fortress of Strassburg; and on the east bank of the Rhine extending from Switzerland almost to Karlsruhe are the Black Forest Mountains which from the days of Caesar have been considered a most formidable obstacle for armies attempting to move through them from west to east. These are all strong natural positions, but the Rhine and Black Forest Mountains are more than that, they are formidable obstacles, and would be impassable if defended by adequate military forces as they most certainly will be should the Allied armies ever reach them.

26. “ Of all the operations of war,” says Jomini, “ there is none more hazardous and difficult than the

passage of a large river in the face of an enemy." Now, when it is remembered that the passage, or attempted passage, of the Rhine in this case would be in the face of an enemy comprising a nation in arms, and not in the face of an enemy few in numbers as were the armies in Jomini's and Napoleon's day; and when it is remembered that the bridges of the Rhine are strongly protected by bridgeheads and field works, and that two railways paralleling the river and many others near the German frontier have been constructed solely with reference to battle lines, permitting quick concentration of troops on any front of the Rhine or German frontier, one is appalled by the very magnitude of the task and cannot but feel that its accomplishment, under present conditions, would be an impossibility—a task beyond human power. In view of all these facts it is submitted that there is no chance of the Allies winning the war solely on the Western Front.

#### THE AUSTRIAN AND ITALIAN FRONT

27. And much of what has been said as to the impregnability of the Western Front against an Allied attack is true of the Austrian front as it existed prior to the Italian Army's being driven back to the line of the Piave. The Austrian front was strong because it virtually extended along a chain of mountains throughout its whole length and its flanks could not be turned. But the Italian front was very weak strategically, because of its great length comparatively with respect to the amount of territory it defended

in Northeastern Italy, because it extended into Austrian territory much like a great salient, except that its contour was circular in form, and because the Austrians occupied the Trentino in force on the flank of and close to the Italian lines of communication. In this weak position, even had the Italians been strongly reinforced, they would not, in my opinion, have been able to hold their position against a powerful German-Austrian attack. And strategically they were not justified in acting offensively along the Julian Alps for the purpose of capturing Trieste and carrying the war into Austria until they had first driven the Austrians from the Trentino and got possession of the Carnic Alps and valley of the Drave.

28. It will be remembered that when Bonaparte drove the Archduke Charles through the Julian Alps back towards Vienna in his remarkable first Italian campaign in March and April, 1797, that he gave General Joubert a powerful army to drive back the Austrians in the Trentino and himself made no effort to cross the mountains until he had made sure of Joubert's success. Then he crossed, and Joubert having practically annihilated the Austrians in his front joined Bonaparte *via* the valley of the Drave.

And it will be remembered also that as a further precaution to protect his rear as he advanced into Austria, he left generals Victor and Kilmaine in Italy with eighteen thousand soldiers, which was a powerful army in those days, being more than one quarter of Bonaparte's entire strength.

29. Now since the Italian line has been forced back

to the Piave, it has become very much easier to defend; because it is very much shorter, because it occupies a strong defensive position through mountains and hills and along the Piave; because its two flanks are protected by formidable obstacles; and because it is in a much safer position for the protection of its line of communications from an Austrian thrust from the Trentino.

30. But from its present position there is no opportunity whatever for a successful offensive against the Austrians, because the farther eastward the Austrian line is forced by the Italian Army, the more exposed and vulnerable become the Italian communications to an Austrian attack from the Trentino. And this, by the way, is the main reason why the Italians in their recent great victory against the Austrians on the Piave did not follow up the Austrians and force them farther and farther back towards their frontier.

31. The fact of the matter is that, so long as the Austrians hold the Trentino in force, there is no hope of making a successful offensive campaign in Italy and of driving the Austrians back into their own territory. And under modern conditions the Austrian troops in the Trentino cannot be forced back and driven out of that mountainous district; for there are so many fine defensive portions and the roads and trails are so few and narrow that the country is very easily defended. Indeed, when properly held by sufficient troops, the whole of the Trentino becomes virtually an impregnable fortress.

32. It must be evident to anyone that had the great armies that have been facing each other for more than four years along the Western Front not had their flanks protected by Switzerland at one end and by Holland at the other, one or the other army would long ago have flanked or turned the other out of position, and one or the other long ago have been decisively defeated. But in the Balkans or in the plains of Austria where the flanks could not rest on neutral countries or impassable obstacles the opposing armies would not face each other long without one or the other being defeated. And an Allied victory there would mean something worth while, since it would probably lead to severing the enemy's communications and to capturing his army.

33. If to the above line of reasoning, the reply be made that it was Napoleon's rule never to invade a country along but a single line of operations, and that we should confine our efforts to the Western Front rather than seek another line of operations, the answer is that we are not invading Germany along this line of operations; there is no invasion; for more than four years we have made no material advance towards Germany; indeed we have not even held our own on the Western Front, for just now, August 26, we are still west of the Hindenburg Line. Evidently Napoleon's rule does not apply here. But since this long and strongly intrenched line, extending from Switzerland to the English Channel, is in fact nothing less than an immense, long fortress, as is also the Italian front, Napoleon's rule as to fortresses does

apply, namely, not to allow them to stop one in his movements, but to leave sufficient containing forces to hold them, and to seek out and bring the enemy's army to battle in the open field of the theater of operations. Why should an American army waste its energy, its substance, and its blood in attacking practically impregnable fortresses, when the same army properly directed against a more vulnerable point of the enemy's forces, would with the same expenditure of energy, substance, and blood most probably be victorious? It is not that we want to win the war without losses, for we do not; we know that cannot be done; but we want to win it with as few losses as possible and we want our losses to produce results.

34. As to the plan herein outlined, the question will of course be asked: What, if any, assurance have we that if we should undertake a campaign from the Salonica front that the Central Powers would not be able to stop our advance, entrench against us, and hold us stationary as they have done on the Western Front and on the Piave in Italy? The answer is, that in this war, fighting has resulted almost solely in entrenched warfare only where the flanks of both armies rest on neutral countries or on impassable obstacles, and that neither in the Balkans nor in Austria is it likely that either of these conditions would prevail. As proof of this statement, attention is invited to the campaigns of this war. In the campaigns between the Germans and Russians or between the Russians and Austrians in the great plains or extended mountain regions of Eastern Germany, Russia, and Aus-

tria, where the flanks of the opposing armies were not protected, war of movement has invariably resulted. It was so also in Roumania and Serbia. And it was so even in Italy, until the Italian Army was driven back to the line of the Piave, where both flanks rest on formidable, if not impassable obstacles. But as to Italy it is well to note, in passing, that a war of movement is still likely to come to pass for the Austrians and Germans should they debouch in force from the west side of Lake Garda upon the communications of the Italian Army.

35. Consider for a moment the Salonica front as it exists today. One flank rests on the Adriatic, the other on the Aegean Sea. But while these two seas, since they are controlled by the Allied navies, would prevent the turning of either Allied flank by the Austrians and Bulgarians, they would, for that very reason, facilitate the turning of the flanks of the Austrians and Bulgarians by the Allies. They are obstacles only to the Austrians and Bulgarians. Having command of these waters, the Allies could at their convenience land an expedition in Albania or Bulgaria to reinforce their own armies or to turn the flank of the Austrians and Bulgarians.

36. To confine our operations solely to the Western and Italian fronts means that the war will drag along indefinitely; it means an interminable contest in which billions of dollars will be spent and millions of lives be lost. Why should we limit ourselves to the accomplishment of these impossible tasks? Why should we needlessly sacrifice the lives of our bravest and

best in trying to break through these practically impregnable lines of the Western and Italian fronts when both the strategy and common sense of the situation clearly point to the plan that we should follow, namely: To hold the Western and Italian fronts with a sufficient containing force to keep the Central Powers from breaking through them, then to direct our efforts into the Balkans and strike Germany through Serbia and Austria—strike her through her back door where she is most vulnerable—strike her not on her strongest but on her weakest front—strike her where a victory will cut in two the theater of operations of the Central Powers and destroy forever Germany's dream of dominion from the Baltic Sea to the Persian Gulf.



## APPENDIX B

### *Why the Salonica Army Was Powerless*<sup>1</sup>

By GORDON GORDON-SMITH

[Captain of the Royal Serbian Army and Attaché of the  
Serbian Legation at Washington]

*Acting as war correspondent for London and New York newspapers, Captain Gordon-Smith was with the Serbian Headquarters Staff in 1915 from the attack on Belgrade to the final retreat through Albania. In July, 1916, at the request of M. Pashitch, he returned to the Serbian headquarters at Salonica and was with the staff of three Serbian armies up to the fall of Monastir. Toward the end of the war he became attached to the Serbian Headquarters Staff with the rank of Captain of Cavalry and has since been sent on important diplomatic missions to Paris, London, and Washington. He has here written for "Current History" the inside facts as to why Sarraïl's army of half a million men stood practically idle until the last months of the war.*

DURING the World War just terminated, with its clash of peoples on a score of fronts, it was difficult for the public to follow the various phases and realize their relative importance. Military tactics and strategy were often divorced from policy, with the result that the co-ordination of the effort

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<sup>1</sup> From the *Current History Magazine*, October, 1919; published by the New York Times Company.

suffered and the war, instead of being waged by the Allies as a whole on a well-defined plan, was split up into a series of water-tight compartments, each of which was regarded by those fighting in it as the crucial one for the decision of the whole war. Some fronts were given undue prominence, others excited little or no interest.

An example of the latter was the Salonica front. The Army of the Orient was the Cinderella of the Allies, as far as treatment was concerned. This front was, in certain quarters, regarded as one of merely secondary importance. The Army of the Orient, under the command of General Sarraïl, was considered to have the mission of holding the line from Monastir to the Aegean, so as to exercise pressure on the German, Austrian, Bulgarian, and Turkish forces defending it, immobilize them, and prevent their utilization elsewhere. But there was no intention of so reinforcing the Allied Army as to permit of its undertaking an energetic offensive and, *coûte que coûte*, cutting the Berlin-Constantinople Railway.

This was, however, a completely false conception of the mission of the Army of the Orient. The Salonica front was not one of *secondary* importance; it was a front of *capital* importance. On no other front would such immense and far-reaching effects have resulted from a successful offensive.

In stating this I am not expressing a merely personal opinion. During the eighteen months I spent with the Headquarters Staff of the Serbian Army I

had continual opportunity of discussing with officers of the highest rank the importance of the whole Balkan front, and in the ten months I passed on the Salonica front, of discussing the real mission of the Army of the Orient. I found them unanimous in their opinion as to the importance of the operations in Macedonia.

#### IMPORTANCE OF RAILWAY

In their opinion, the objective of the Army of the Orient was the cutting of the Berlin-Constantinople Railway. It was notorious that Germany drew immense resources from Asia Minor, and that Bulgaria and Serbia were also laid under contributions.

A swarm of German officials had been sent down to these countries, which had been cut up into sections like a chess board, and were swept clean of everything that could be made use of. All day and every day trains filled with food were rolling up to Germany from the Balkan States and Asia Minor, while the trains traveling from Germany to Constantinople were filled with munitions, without which the resistance of Turkey to the British and Russian armies would at once have collapsed.

The possession of the Berlin-Constantinople Railroad further assured the Central Powers the mastery of the Dardanelles. As Germany controlled the entrances to the Baltic, Russia was practically isolated from her allies. The only means they had of forwarding war material to her was *via* Vladivostok or Archangel. In other words "Mittel-Europa" was

realized and a situation created which, if it could have been made permanent, would have assured to Germany the domination of Europe, the first step to world dominion.

There is not the slightest doubt that the cutting of the railway would have brought about the immediate collapse of Turkey. This would have meant the reopening of the Dardenelles, the reprovisioning of Russia, then still in the field, with munitions, of which she was sorely in need, and the delivery to the Allies of the immense quantities of foodstuffs accumulated in Southern Russia after the closing of the strait. At the same time the collapse of Turkey as a military power would have set free the British armies in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Palestine and the Russian Army in the Caucasus for service elsewhere.

#### BLUNDER OF THE ALLIES

The appearance of the Allied fleets in the Black Sea would undoubtedly have called a halt to the intrigues of the Pro-German court camarilla surrounding the Czar, and even if the Russian revolution had nevertheless taken place, the Kerensky army on the Polish front, as a "force in being," would have been maintained, Bolshevism would have been nipped in the bud, and the whole course of the war might have been changed. The failure to recognize these elementary truths constitutes the second capital error of the Allies in the Balkans and undoubtedly prolonged the war by at least two years.

Once Bulgaria and Turkey were disposed of, the

Army of the Orient could have reoccupied Serbia, moved on the Danube, and threatened Budapest. The Hungarian capital would then have been menaced from three sides — from the Danube, from the Roumanian front, and by the Russian Army then operating in the Bukowina. The country around Budapest being one immense plain, on which there are no fortresses of any importance, the defense of the capital would have called for an immense number of men, which Austria at that moment did not possess.

The chief arguments of the opponents of the Salonica front were: (1) The excessive demands it made on tonnage, (2) the difficulties of communication, and (3) the mountainous nature of the country.

The excessive demands made on tonnage for the transport of troops and war material was due to the failure of the Allies to utilize all the means of transport at their disposal. For eighteen long months they only made use of the sea route. As a transport steaming at ten knots (the speed imposed on it by the scarcity of coal) took ten days to make the voyage from Marseille to Salonica, a ship could only deliver one cargo per month. At the same time the Mediterranean and the Aegean were swarming with submarines, and a large proportion of the transports were sunk. It was only in December, 1917, that someone in the War Office in London perceived that if troops and stores were forwarded by land to Taranto in the south of Italy they could be shipped over to Greece in a single night, thus avoiding the submarine danger. One ship going backward and for-

ward between Italy and the Greek ports could therefore do the work of ten running from Marseille to Salonica.

#### MARVELS IN ROAD BUILDING

As soon as this was realized, a clause giving the Allies the right to disembark troops and stores at Itea, the Greek railhead in the Gulf of Lepanto, whence they could be forwarded by rail to Salonica, was inserted in one of the many ultimata sent to King Constantine. The Italians also constructed a "route carrossable" from Santi Quaranta to Monastir, a marvel of military engineering, by which they were able to send thousands of tons a day of war material by motor truck.

As regards the second difficulty—the means of communication in Macedonia itself—an immense improvement had been made. When the expeditionary force first landed, in 1915, there were only three lines of railway—and those single track—and such roads as had existed under the Turkish *régime*. But the three hundred thousand men composing General Sarraill's force, reinforced by thousands of Macedonian peasants, in less than a year and a half constructed thousands of kilometers of roads and hundreds of kilometers of light railways.

Mountains on which a year before only sheep tracks existed were made accessible to heavy guns. An immense amount of motor transport was accumulated; and hundreds of thousands of pack animals were at the disposal of the Allied Army. The army of

General Sarraill was, therefore, *if reinforced*, in a position to undertake a successful offensive. The Serbian advanced lines were in January, 1917, only a matter of eighty miles from Nish, one of the principal stations of the Berlin-Constantinople Railway.

The third objection—the mountainous nature of the country—was greatly exaggerated. It did not offer any insuperable obstacle to military operations. The brilliant campaign of Field Marshal Misitch, which culminated in the capture of Monastir, is a proof of this. He attacked, with inferior numbers, an enemy intrenched in most formidable mountain strongholds and drove them from one position after another. In fact, the superior skill of the Serbians in mountain fighting gave them a distinct advantage over the Germans in a country like the Balkans. Their knowledge of the country enabled them to seize advantages to outmaneuver an enemy who was not accustomed to that kind of warfare. It may further be argued that in no country has there ever been so much fighting as in the Balkans.

The mountainous nature of the country did not prevent the states composing the Balkan League from inflicting in 1912 a crushing defeat on Turkey; neither did it prevent the German-Austrian-Bulgarian armies in 1915 from driving the Serbian Army into Albania. On that occasion two hundred and fifty thousand Serbs resisted the invasion of seven hundred and fifty thousand Germans, Austrians, and Bulgarians for over two months. The fact that they

were able to do so is only attributable to their superior skill in this kind of warfare.

#### SALONICA'S NAVAL VALUE

The Salonica front had not only immense military importance, but its naval value could hardly be overestimated—by this I mean its naval value for the enemy. If, by any chance, the Germans and their allies had driven the Army of the Orient out of Salonica and seized the city and bay, the effect would have been simply catastrophic.

The port of Salonica is one of the most magnificent in the world; a land-locked harbor miles in extent, in which the navies of the world could lie at anchor. If this had fallen into the hands of the Germans they would at once have formed it into a submarine base of the most formidable kind. Then would have followed the invasion of Greece. Once the Germans were in firm possession of that country, they would have established other submarine bases in the rocky and indented coast line of Greece and in the hundreds of islands forming the Archipelago. Once they were firmly established there, the task of driving them out would have been one of superhuman difficulty.

The result would have been that hundreds of submarines and submarine mine layers would have been let loose in the Aegean and the Mediterranean. It would have been perfectly possible for them to stop all traffic by the Suez Canal, thereby cutting Great Britain off from direct communication with India, and



depriving the large British Army holding Egypt from receiving supplies and munitions. The attack by the Turks on the Suez Canal would then undoubtedly have been resumed, as the difficulty of providing the army defending Egypt with munitions would have rendered the chances of success more than probable.

In these circumstances, the Suez Canal being put out of commission, the Germans would have left no stone unturned to bring about trouble in British India. That this was their program is proved by the prosecution of Hindu conspirators held in 1917 in San Francisco. With the Suez Canal cut, the only means of communication between Great Britain and India would have been the long and difficult voyage *via* the Cape of Good Hope.

It was, therefore, for the Allies a life-and-death question not only to maintain themselves in force on the Salonica front, but it was also of the highest importance that this front should be so reinforced as to allow the Army of the Orient to take an energetic offensive and cut the Berlin-Constantinople line.

There was, in addition, the danger that the Russian collapse might any day set free some hundreds of thousands of German troops for service in the Balkans. There is no doubt that the Great General Staff at Berlin was thoroughly alive to the immense results which would follow from successful operations at Salonica; in fact, the loss of Salonica would be irreparable. Once Germany was master of the Aegean and the Mediterranean, victory for her would be in sight. That the Great General Staff did not under-

take operations only proves how hard pressed it was on other fronts. This renders the failure of the Allies to realize their opportunity all the more inexcusable.

#### ERROR IN BRITISH ATTITUDE

On the Salonica front the only possible policy was, therefore, an energetic offensive. But in certain British circles it was argued that this front could perfectly well fulfill its mission by simply defending the intrenched camp of Salonica. This, supported by the guns of the fleet, was, they declared, impregnable.

There could be no greater error. Any abandonment of the line running from the Albanian frontier across the plain of Monastir and along the Moglene Mountain range to Lake Doiran and the Struma Valley would have been disastrous. It would have permitted the German troops and their allies to seize Greece and threaten Salonica both by land and sea. Once masters of Greece, Germany would have had little difficulty in rendering the access to Salonica by sea or land either impossible or a matter of extreme difficulty.

The intrenched camp could have been closely invested until such time as the Germans and their allies had established themselves solidly in Greece and Greek Macedonia and concentrated overwhelmingly superior forces for an attack. With the Aegean Sea swarming with hostile submarines, the position of the force defending the intrenched camp would have been precarious in the extreme. The prize was too

great for the Germans not to put forward every effort to win it.

Such a policy would have cut off all communication between the Italian force in Albania and the Army of the Orient. Shortly after the capture of Monastir the *liaison* was successfully established between the Italian Army of occupation in Albania and the forces of General Sarrail, so that the fighting line was continuous from Avlona on the Adriatic to the Gulf of Cavalla on the Aegean. The successful expulsion of the Germans and Bulgarians from Greek Macedonia entailed ten months of hard fighting and cost the Army of the Orient forty thousand men. Its abandonment would have meant the loss of thousands of kilometers of roads and hundreds of kilometers of light railways constructed at a cost of millions of dollars. In addition, the unfortunate population would have been delivered over to the tender mercies of a ruthless and cruel enemy.

No more suicidal policy could therefore have been imagined than any abandonment of the conquered territory by the Allies, and the idea of confining the task of the Army of the Orient to the defense of the intrenched camp was, in the opinion of all competent authorities on the spot with whom I discussed the question, strategically and tactically unsound.

#### ARMY OF FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND PARALYZED

The result of this failure of the Allies to realize the importance of the Salonica front (or perhaps it would be more correct to say their divided opinions

in regard to it) paralyzed the action of an army of five hundred thousand men. This was more than was required for the mere defense of the intrenched camp of Salonica and not sufficient to undertake an offensive. Every time the Army of the Orient undertook a successful operation it was unable to follow it up for want of men.

The capture of Florina by the French and Serbs on September 18, 1916, was a case in point. The Bulgarians retired with such precipitation that little would have been required to turn their retreat into a rout. But the necessary reserves for this were lacking, with the result that instead of being driven back in confusion to Prilep and Veles the Bulgarians were able to reform their fleeing regiments, "dig themselves in" a few miles farther back and again arrest the operations of the Allied Army.<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks later came the second offensive, the brilliant campaign of the army under the command of Field Marshal Misitch, which resulted in the capture of Monastir. But as before he possessed no reserves, he was unable to follow up his victory with the result that the retreating enemy once more were able to intrench themselves in formidable mountain positions. And during all this time the Army of the Orient was melting away as the result of the ravages of malaria. The armies sweltering on the plains fell victim to it by tens of thousands. At one time there were not enough hospital ships to repatriate the sick.

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<sup>1</sup> With sufficient reserves the beginning of the end of the war would probably have come at this time.—H. H. S.

## FRANCE FOR ACTION

When the position of the Army of the Orient had thus been reduced to one of stalemate I had, in the early months of 1917, occasion to visit Paris and London and made it my business to find out the views of the French and British statesmen regarding the Salonica front. In Paris I had long conversations with M. Briand, then Prime Minister; M. Stephen Pichon, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs; General Malleterre, the famous French military writer; M. Humbert, member of the Commission of the Senate on Military Affairs; Colonel Rousset, the eminent military critic of the *Petit Parisien*, and a score or so of other well-known public men and soldiers.

I also had long conversations with M. Sevastopoula, Counselor of the Russian Embassy, and Colonel Count Ignatieff, the Russian member of the Inter-Allied Military Council. I found that they completely shared the views of their French allies. The latter were unanimously in favor of an energetic offensive on the Salonica front and deplored the short-sightedness of the British military authorities.

When I spoke with M. Briand and urged the importance of the Salonica front he replied to me: "My dear M. Gordon-Smith, you are preaching to the converted. It was I who sent the Army of the Orient to Salonica and who have kept it there. If you see Lloyd George in London tell him from me that M. Briand is more convinced than ever of the strategical and political importance of the Salonica front."

## BRITISH FOR WITHDRAWAL

A week later I was in London and found myself face to face with a stone wall. The public knew nothing about Salonica and cared less. The *Daily Mail* had, on January 18, published an article proposing purely and simply to withdraw the whole army from Salonica, a repetition of Gallipoli. The impression made in Paris by this article was disastrous, so much so that the censor "got busy" and issued a stern warning to the press to abstain from discussing the situation in Salonica.

The military censorship would allow no discussion of the situation in the Balkans. All the correspondents of London journals had been expelled from Salonica with the exception of Ward Price, correspondent of the Newspaper Proprietors' Association, (a syndicate of the London Journals,) and Mr. Ferguson of Reuter's Agency. As all their dispatches were strictly censored first in Salonica and a second time in London, no news of any importance was allowed to transpire and the word Salonica had practically disappeared from the columns of the London press. It was openly declared that it was on the Western Front alone that the war would be decided and no discussion of this theory was permitted.

The only public man who seemed to have understood the importance of the Salonica front was John Dillon, the leader of the Irish Party in the House of Commons. He delivered an admirable speech on the subject in the House, but so rigid was the "taboo"

on everything concerning Salonica that the only publication which had the courage to publish it was the *New Europe*.

It was notorious that General Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial Staff, and all the men surrounding him were out-and-out "westerners" and refused to listen to any proposals to undertake any offensive elsewhere. As a result the Army of the Orient, its ranks ravaged by malaria due to its failure to advance out of the swampy plains surrounding Salonica, was melting away uselessly in complete inaction.<sup>1</sup> It was an open secret that in England the military party had completely got the upper hand and had seized not only the military but also the political conduct of the war. The War Office and the Foreign Office were often in conflict. The Imperial General Staff turned a deaf ear to all counsels which did not square with their particular views.

It was at this moment that I had a number of conversations with Lord Northcliffe. I found him strongly imbued with "western" ideas, but I so far shook his confidence in the infallibility of the "western" theory that he gave me permission to state the case for Salonica in a letter addressed to the editor of the *Times*. This I did in terms of extreme moderation, but was informed a day or two later that it had been suppressed by the censor from the first line to the last and returned to the *Times* with the order "Not to be published" stamped on every page.

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<sup>1</sup> Nothing is more discouraging to soldiers than forced inaction in the presence of an enemy.—H. H. S.

## UNIFIED COMMAND WINS

It was only after weeks and weeks of sapping and mining that the civil power was able to assert itself once more. Lloyd George planned in secret the organization of the Supreme War Council in Versailles. When its creation was intimated to General Sir William Robertson he at once in protest tendered his resignation as chief of the Imperial General Staff, which, probably much to his surprise, was promptly accepted. Colonel Rapington, the military critic of the *Times*, also an out-and-out "westerner" to whom the Salonica front was anathema, rushed to the assistance of his chief with such a want of moderation of language that he was promptly haled before the courts and fined £100 under the Defense of the Realm act. Then General Maurice, Director of Operations, issued the manifesto which cost him his position. A number of subordinates, known to be out-and-out "westerners," were removed, and the power of the Imperial General Staff to impose its will on the statesmen was at an end. Lloyd George triumphed and General Foch was intrusted with the supreme direction of the war.

## OFFENSIVE BEGUN AT LAST

The result was a complete change of policy and strategy in the Balkans. General Sarraill was recalled and replaced by General Guillaumat, one of the most brilliant commanders from the Western Front. As soon as he had the Army of the Orient reorganized and reinforced, General Franchet d'Es-



pérey, the commander of the Fifth French Army Group, was sent out to take command at Salonica and an energetic offensive was at once begun.

As before, the chief attack was intrusted to the Serbian contingent of the Army of the Orient. It attacked with splendid *élan* the Bulgarian intrenchments on the Dobra Polie, drove in their center, and then rolled the opposing army up right and left. Through the breach thus made poured the French and British contingents; the retreat became a rout, and in five days' time the army of King Ferdinand capitulated.

The Serbs continued their triumphant advance, the Berlin-Constantinople Railway was seized and the Danube front reached. In a fortnight's time Turkey collapsed, the Dardanelles were opened and the Allied fleets entered the Black Sea. Austria saw the game was up and sued for peace. The German Empire was therefore menaced from the rear. Field Marshal von Hindenburg saw that under these circumstances nothing could save the situation and begged for an armistice. Thus the war which began in the Balkans, for the Balkans, ended in the Balkans.

That this would be the inevitable result of an energetic offensive had long been clear to everyone on the spot, but unfortunately the voices of those who advocated it had long been the "voices of those crying in the wilderness." It is only when the historian begins a detailed study of the World War in all its phases that the astonishing errors of the *Entente* in its Near Eastern policy will become apparent.



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At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War he organized a volunteer regiment of which he was appointed colonel. With this regiment he served under General Leonard Wood in Cuba. A year later, as lieutenant-colonel of the Twenty-ninth Volunteer Infantry, he took an active part in the fighting in the Philippines and was in command of the attacking forces at the battle of San Mateo, in which General Lawton was killed. For these services he was recommended for a brevet in the regular army by both Generals Wood and Otis.

In 1911 he was retired for defective hearing, but was temporarily recalled to active service in 1916; and soon after the beginning of the war with Germany was recommended by ex-President Roosevelt and twenty-four general officers of the United States

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During the summer of 1917 he served as assistant to the Department Quartermaster of the Western Department at San Francisco, California. In September, 1917, he was appointed professor of military science and tactics at Princeton University, where he served until March, 1918, when he was detailed in the War Plans Division of the General Staff at the Army War College, Washington, D. C. After the "armistice" he was, at his own request, relieved from active duty and ordered to his home at Jacksonville, Oregon.



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